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RECENT TRENDS IN THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN REGIME AND THE RISE OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ON THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN STAGE

AUTHOR

Deniz Gökalp
Associate Professor, American University in Dubai

ABSTRACT

The United Arab Emirates is an Arab Gulf state that has received growing attention as one of the 21st century's most generous humanitarian aid donors in the world. The young gulf monarchy, like the other fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, has a well-known history of commitment to aiding nations in need. Since its foundation in 1971 it has been inspired by Arab and Islamic solidarity (i.e., old Emirati humanitarianism) and since the 2000s it has been influenced by regional politics and national security concerns (i.e., new Emirati humanitarianism). Limited academic literature on the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) foreign aid, as is the case with the literature on the Arab Gulf states and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as aid donors, has at times problematised UAE aid based on the grounds that the UAE has motives and methods different from those of the western world and poses a potential challenge to the western principles and norms guiding foreign aid. Contrary to this kind of opposing distinction, this article contends that the new Emirati humanitarianism has been guided and inspired by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's norms of transparency, accountability and efficiency; the United Nations' neoliberal agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals; the US-led international practices of stabilisation in conflict zones; and the new market-oriented global trends of commercialisation, digitalisation and innovation in humanitarian governance in the 21st century.

Deniz Gökalp is Associate Professor of Sociology in the Department of International and Middle Eastern Studies at the American University in Dubai. This paper is part of the project "Humanitarian Diplomacy: Assessing Policies, Practices and Impact of New Forms of Humanitarian Action and Foreign Policy" funded by the Research Council of Norway (project number 286859) and led by Antonio De Lauri at the Chr. Michelsen Institute.

INTRODUCTION

The encroachment of neoliberalism has drastically increased dependency on humanitarian aid across the world, more specifically in the Global South since the end of the 1970s (Barnett &Weiss 2008). The old humanitarian donors from the Global North have begun to delegate their humanitarian duties to a variety of private and non-state actors including businesses, for-profit social enterprises, international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) by the end of the 20th century. Since the outset of the 21st century, discourses of war and humanitarianism have been intertwined as the countries of the Global North have turned 'humanitarian wars' into a norm of war-making (Roberts 1993, Menon 2016, Gökalp 2019), and the same western world has been committed to a new form of global neoliberal governance to manage the financial as well as political costs of the humanitarian crises that they contributed to in the global periphery countries such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Libya (Mamdani 2004, Scahill 2013, Davidson 2017). Over the past two decades, there has been a series of 'new' or 're-emerging' state donors from the Global South (e.g., Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) coming to the fore with their foreign policy ambitions and willingness to intervene with impressive amounts of humanitarian and development aid in humanitarian crises in the Middle East, Africa and around the world (Villanger 2007, Momani & Ennis 2012, Altunisik 2019). The new or 're-emerging' state donors have been joined by other interesting parties, such as Russia, Brazil, India and China (BRIC), with increasingly visible humanitarian aid and efforts in recent years (Binder et al. 2010, Brezhneva & Ukhova 2013, Snetkov & Lanteigne 2015, Harig & Kenkel 2017).

The 21st century has witnessed a drastic transformation in the international humanitarian space with the growing presence of businesses, social enterprises, NGOs and 'new' or 're-emerging' state donors, as well as with the changing principles and practices of humanitarianism according to the rationalities of neoliberalism and capitalist market expansionism. In line with this transformation of power in conflict and the humanitarian landscape, there has emerged a literature not only on the changing power dynamics in the geopolitics of humanitarian intervention with the (re)emergence of the donors from the Global South (Stuenkel 2014, Snetkov & Lanteigne 2015, Ziadah 2019a & b), but also about the changing nature of the international humanitarian regime towards politicisation, militarisation, commercialisation and market-based rationalisation in the 21st century (Duffield 2001 & 2012, Barnett & Weiss 2008, Hyndman 2009, Reid 2010, Barnett 2011, Burns 2019, Ziadah 2019a).

Challenging the literature searching for distinct differences between the traditional state donors from the Global North and the re-emerging state donors from the Global South in terms of principles, policies, methods and motivations, Ziadah (2019a & b), focusing on the UAE and the Arabian Gulf states, argues that there is no binary distinction between the donor states from the Global North and the Global South in terms of the humanitarian as well as military campaigns that they organise in the 21st century. The UAE is a young Arab Gulf state that has received growing attention as one of the most generous humanitarian aid donors in the world in the 21st century.

The young Gulf monarchy, like the other fellow members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has a well-known history of commitment to aiding nations in need, which has been inspired by Arab and Islamic solidarity since its foundation in 1971 (i.e., old Emirati humanitarianism), and influenced by regional politics and national security concerns since the 2000s (i.e., new Emirati humanitarianism) (Villanger 2007, Al Mazeini 2017, Gökalp 2020). According to Al Mezaini (2017), the transformation in the UAE's foreign aid has been from commitment to supporting Arab nationalism and Islamic solidarity embedded in a neutral conflict-averse foreign policy between 1970s and 2000s to politicisation dictated by national security concerns discernible in an assertive foreign-policy agenda since the 2000s. Accordingly, within the past two decades, the UAE's humanitarian aid has been directed by the country's political, economic and military engagements in the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans (Al Mezaini 2017, Bartlett & Lindsay 2017, Ziadah 2019a & b), while the UAE's humanitarian diplomacy as a pillar of the country's public diplomacy has been institutionalised and modernised as part of nation-building consolidation, nation-branding and efforts for international recognition (Office of Public and Cultural Diplomacy 2022, Momani & Ennis 2012, Al Mezaini 2017, Gökalp 2020).

As part of efforts to brand the nation a trustworthy, liberal pro-western state in the international arena of foreign aid, the young Gulf monarchy became the first non-Development Assistant Committee (DAC) 'participant' in the DAC, promising transparent and professional data recording and reporting in the nation's previously opaque foreign-aid sector, following an assertive engagement with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009.

Despite being a non-OECD-DAC member, the UAE has adopted 'the OECD-DACs principles of good humanitarian donorship' since 2010 (MoFA&IC 2019), which are used by the OECD to facilitate humanitarian data collection and measurement of success in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. In 2019, the UAE announced the introduction of a wider definition of aid for recording, analysis and reporting purposes to address an internationally known and criticised issue associated with lack of transparency in funds from private sources and charities with religious and/or cultural motivations (e.g., Zakat and Sadaqah) that the UAE channels as foreign aid (MoFA&IC 2019: 17). The UAE became one of the three non-western members of the United Nations' (UN) Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Support Group in 2006; and the only non-western and Arab country in the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Donor Support Group in 2009 (Binder, Meier and Steets 2010). In 2015, the UAE embraced the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) avidly and began immediately incorporating them into foreign aid action plans. Humanitarian aid has been an integral and increasingly highlighted part of the broader framework for the country's foreign aid policy, guided by the international principles that are prioritised by the UN, especially in MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and SDGs since early 2000s (see for example, OCFA 2009, MoFA&IC 2016 & 2019).

The UAE has been one of the leading members and financiers of US-led international stabilisation operations that used humanitarianism as counterinsurgency in conflict zones such as Iraq and Syria (UAE Embassy-Washington 2016, MoFA&IC 2017, 2018, Syria Recovery Trust Fund 2020, Ziadah 2019a).

Indeed, the UAE's increasingly ambitious humanitarian diplomacy has been in accordance with the country's military engagements and foreign policy interests, but also guided and inspired by the UN's promoted discourses of 'sustainable development' at home and in the Global South. The annual Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development (DIHAD) Conference and Exhibition illustrates the connection between humanitarian aid and development for the UAE bringing 'humanitarian' and 'development' together in its title. More importantly, DIHAD is a prime example of commercialised humanitarianism as a platform for businesses and for-profit social enterprises to showcase their goods and services that are needed in humanitarian operations by a wide array of different actors on the ground. In recent years, the UAE has strengthened its collaboration with western multilateral organisations such as the UN World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, the World Health Organisation, UNHCR, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in international efforts of humanitarian intervention in conflict, war and disaster regions as well. The International Humanitarian City (IHC) in Dubai was established in 2003 to house the biggest humanitarian aid warehouse in the world, and the offices of the leading intergovernmental organisations, international NGOs and private businesses involved in humanitarianism. IHC launched the Humanitarian Logistics Databank (HLD) in 2018 to 'enhance capacity' for a more efficient, swift and transparent distribution of aid from the UAE to the rest of the world (IHC 2022, HLD 2022). The other hubs of humanitarian aid around the world will be gradually added to the database, and the HLD is promoted as a crucial innovation serving the immediate needs of the global humanitarian community relying increasingly on remote controlling and digitalisation in the 21st century (HLD 2022).

Limited academic literature on the UAE's foreign aid, as is the case with the literature on the Arab Gulf states and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as aid donors, has at times problematised the UAE aid based on the grounds that the UAE has motives and methods different from those of the western world and poses a potential challenge to the western principles and norms guiding foreign aid (Young 2017). Contrary to this kind of opposing distinction, this article contends that the new Emirati humanitarianism has been guided and inspired by the OECD norms of transparency, accountability and efficiency; the neoliberal agenda of the UN's SDGs; US-led international practices of stabilisation in conflict zones; and the new market-oriented global trends of commercialisation, digitalisation and innovation in humanitarian governance in the 21st century. The rest of the article first provides a section of discussion dealing with the UAE positioning itself within the broader phenomenon of neoliberal humanitarianism in the 21st century, and then continues with an analysis on how new global trends of market-based rationalisation have guided Emirati humanitarianism in recent years as part of nation-branding. This article argues that the UAE, as a re-emerging humanitarian donor in the 21st century, is committed to instrumentalising the new norms and rationalities of neoliberal humanitarianism for acknowledgment and recognition by the US-led western cooperation and coalitions in humanitarian spaces, and capitalises strategically on the most recent trends in humanitarianism (i.e., development-orientation, commercialisation and innovation through digitalisation).

THE RISE OF THE UAE IN THE INTERNATIONAL NEOLIBERAL HUMANITARIAN REGIME

The world has witnessed increasing complexity of aid networks between the Global North and the Global South since end of the Cold War. Duffield (2001: 309) calls it 'the thickening of international aid networks between metropolitan and borderland areas' starting from the 1990s. The trend has been parallel to politically motivated and highly ambitious military interventions by western nation-states in conflict or other kinds of crisis situation concerning 'weak', 'fragile', 'failed', 'failing' or 'rouge' states in the global periphery. The goal of the intervening western states has in most cases turned out to impose a desired political order (e.g., market economy, party politics, civil society, etc.) through internationally organised agendas for 'stabilisation', 'reconstruction', 'state-building' and/or 'development' (Gordon 2006, Goodhand 2013), involving a 'significant expansion and deepening complexity of subcontracting arrangements, auditing techniques, partnership frameworks and global compacts linking metropolitan states, multilateral agencies, NGOs and private companies' (Duffield 2001: 310). Especially in the beginning of the 21st century, the western/northern dominated international humanitarian regime was instrumentalised to reinforce the changing organisation of warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq. The UN security council, the United States and the western European states have been the pioneers of 'the age of liberal humanitarianism' (Barnett 2011) or humanitarianism for 'global liberal governance' (Duffield 2001, 2014) in this new era of growing ambitions to govern social, political and economic order in the global periphery.

Some authors have renamed liberal humanitarianism 'neoliberal humanitarianism', '[c]ontemporary humanitarianism is a product, a symptom and a suggested solution to neoliberal political and economic transformation: it is neoliberal humanitarianism' (Sözer 2019: 2).

The discourse of humanitarianism has become imperative for justifying military interventions by western states in the Global South, coupled with the market-oriented discourse of sustainable development in the so-called 'stabilisation efforts' in conflict regions. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) (1994: 24) had already re-defined human security in seven areas in 1990s: 1) economic security; 2) food security; 3) health security; 4) environmental security; 5) personal security; 6) community security; and 7) political security. The objectives of development aid have begun to overlap with the objectives of humanitarian aid since then, as ensuring 'human security' has become more comprehensive and means more than simply 'saving lives'. In the meantime, neoliberal policies have already been made a prerequisite for development aid by international financial institutions since the late 1970s, which in turn have contributed immensely to deteriorating welfare and security situations in the Global South, translating into growing incentives in the Global North to contain human suffering and humanitarian crises with more development and humanitarian aid (Duffield 2008, Hyndman 2009, Donini 2010). Economic interventions through structural adjustment programs by western financial organisations (e.g., the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank), in addition to military interventions of the proxies and armies of the Global North, have created deeper dependency on humanitarian aid in the Global South when the states' capacity to provide for their citizens is further undermined.

There are increasingly complex hierarchies in this highly stratified globalising world of neoliberalism, hierarchies that are being reproduced and perpetuated by increasingly more technical discourses about humanitarianism and interventions in the name of human security. Donini (2010: 228) notes that humanitarianism has been an underlying theme of the relations between the Global North and the Global South, and has been instrumentalised by the Global North, more specifically by Empire, in a gradual transformation from a world of 'national liberation', 'decolonisation' and 'modernisation' to a world of 'structural adjustment', 'governance' and 'sustainable development', where structural issues, hierarchies and inequalities are hidden or distorted by humanitarianism. This kind of transformation of the geopolitical-economic power refers to 'new colonial relations' based on exploitation, Burns (2019) argues, apparent in technologically enabled sites of capital accumulation at the expense of marginalised populations targeted for humanitarian aid. Burns (2019) looks into the context of philanthro-capitalism, where the distinction between non-profit and profit is blurred, and which he sees as a symptom of neoliberalism. The domination of market imperatives and/or market-based rationalities in decisions about humanitarian aid and action is the underlying force of neoliberal humanitarianism and, in return, contributes to capital accumulation and introduces new hierarchies to the relations between the donors and the beneficiaries (Burns 2019).

Neoliberal humanitarianism refers to the new organisational model for governance in humanitarian situations where there is a multitude of vulnerabilities and issues concerning human security to be addressed by a multitude of international state and non-state (as well as for-profit and non-profit) actors that are there to provide the most needed help in the most measurably efficient, swift and technologically creative way (i.e., neoliberal governance based on facts, statistics, quantitative evidence and creative capitalism) (Mitchell 2016). The western governments, while remaining as main donors and policy-makers, have since been accompanied by non-state actors (e.g., businesses, NGOs, for-profit social enterprises, celebrity campaigns, etc.) and/or some new or re-emerging state donors from the Global South to provide humanitarian aid for increasingly urgent humanitarian crises in the Global South.

The literature has different viewpoints pertaining to the political economy of aid from re-emerging donors such as the UAE. One viewpoint that stands out is presented by Karen Young (2015, 2017) who claims that the UAE, as a re-emerging and ambitious aid donor, is motivated by its political and investment interests that challenge western interests, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. She argues that the UAE utilises aid methods and mechanisms that are divergent from western/northern norms and principles, as evident in the Emirati reluctance to channel aid through multilateral organisations (Young 2017). Her analysis positions western and non-western aid agendas against each other, as though they threaten or oppose each other, which is not necessarily the case, as argued in this article. Another viewpoint can be found in the work of Antonio Donini (2010), who argues that there is a distinct separation between western humanitarianism and the non-western humanitarianisms of countries such as China, India, Turkey and the Gulf countries (e.g., the UAE).

Donini (2010: 222) sees the traditional (western) and non-traditional (non-western) aid donors as belonging to two separate universes of humanitarianism, but he does not assume the moral superiority of the former over the latter: 'these two universes – and it is unclear which one contributes more to saving and protecting lives – do not necessarily meet. And when they do, misunderstandings and friction abound.' Drawing on Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, Donini talks about the hierarchical imperial order and its relationship to humanitarianism, and he sees the parallels between economic globalization and military interventions in the Global South. While he imagines the non-western aid donors to be categorically separate from their northern/western counterparts in the hierarchical imperial order, he does not elaborate on where the new non-western aid donors fall in the newly emerging order of global hierarchies in the 21st century. Donini (2010: 225), however, mentions that the only way for humanitarian actors from the Global South (more specifically, he means southern NGOs) to be accepted into the world of the western humanitarianism is 'to mimic the behavior of their Northern counterparts'.

A more intricate perspective is presented by Rafeef Ziadah (2018, 2019a, 2019b), who delineates the geo-economic spatial networks of power through which the UAE has been integrated into the neoliberal reorganisation of capitalism, war and humanitarianism in the 21st century. Ziadah (2019b: 296) points out the decades-long strategic alliance between the UAE and the US, and how the UAE has been 'mirroring' US methods of engagement using the same 'military and discursive tools', including neoliberal approaches to humanitarian aid. Ziadah's analysis presents a more nuanced approach to understanding the role of the re-emerging donors from the Global South in terms of their relation to the changing nature of international humanitarianism that is defined by neoliberalism, militarism and expansionary capitalism of the 21st century.

Ziadah (2019a) highlights the geographically expanding nature of the UAE's logistical capacities, which gives this young nation significant relevance regionally and internationally within the increasingly securitised, privatised and bunkerised world of humanitarianism. Accordingly, the UAE has managed to turn its geo-economic advantage into a successful project of branding the nation as a stable, predictable, liberal and benevolent ally of the US-led western world as opposed to the so-called 'volatility, fragility and anti-western fickleness' of the Middle Eastern politics. Referencing Ahmed Kanna's Dubai, the City as Corporation, Ziadah (2019a) points out that the Dubai IHC is an example for 'corporate branding' in a 'city corporation' (i.e., Dubai) as humanitarianism is a pillar of nation-branding in the UAE.

NATION-BRANDING

The UAE presents a beacon of hope and positive change in the region, leading the humanitarian and social sector with aims to empower Arab youth with opportunities to harness their creativity in building their societies. Through implementing pioneering initiatives and projects, the UAE aims to enhance the quality of life, combat disease, fight despair and negativity and effectively contribute to creating a better reality for the vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged in Arab societies. (Official UAE Nation Brand Website, 2022)

Two recent historical developments, 9/11 in 2001 and the Arab Spring in 2011, have amplified the significance of nation-branding for the UAE, a small nation with big ambitions that has always looked for international recognition since its foundation in 1971. The US-led war against terrorism pushed the UAE further away from political Islam and Islamist radicalism and made Islamic secularism a key feature of the liberal, secular, pro-western nation-branding image presented to the western world (Al Mezaini 2017, Young 2017).

As public diplomacy has become more institutionalised and modernised as part of national efforts for nation-branding, humanitarian diplomacy has become one of the six pillars of the UAE's public diplomacy agenda highlighting the young nation's quest for visibility within the western-dominated international scene of aid. The UAE has gradually started to stand out in the international arena not only as one of the top humanitarian donors, but also as a leading member and funder in international coalitions to combat terrorism, including the Global Coalition Against Daesh and the Coalition Working Groups on Stabilisation and Strategic Communications (UAE Embassy-Washington 2016, UAE Embassy-Washington 2022). International initiatives such as the Syria Recovery Trust Fund and the UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilisation (FFS) in Iraq are two multilateral engagements led by the Global North that the UAE has contributed to politically, logistically and financially since their inception.

While a discourse around humanitarianism was always an integral element of foreign policy since the UAE's foundation, more recently, it has become incorporated into an ambitious nation-branding project that is characterised by a quest for further political unification and economic development domestically, and economic and political leverage regionally and internationally. The Office of Public and Cultural Diplomacy publicises proudly that the UAE soft power ranks 18th and 17th in the world in 2020 and 2021 respectively, and first in the Middle East in both years according to the Global Soft Power Index, a source of pride for the Emiratis owing to their nation-branding efforts.

There has been a theme highlighting a developmental goal or a nation-branding strategy every year since 2015 in the UAE. The year 2020 was themed as '2020: Towards the Next 50', with a focus on innovation and post-oil economy that are expected to mark the development plans for the next 50 years following the first 50-year history of the country. Two national committees were tasked for 2020 to, 1) design the next 50-year development plan (the 50- year Development Plan Committee); and 2) oversee the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the country in 2021 (The Golden Jubilee Celebrations Committee) (Hussein 2019).

In 2021, the annual national theme was '2021: Year of the 50th' marking the 50th anniversary of the country (the Golden Jubilee). Suggesting the same kind of economy-oriented national strategy as 2020 was 'the [10] Principles of the 50' announced in September 2021 by the government on the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the UAE. The First Principle focuses on the consolidation of the state between the seven Emirates through 'the strengthening of the union, its institutions, legislature, capabilities and finances', the Second Principle promises 'building the best and the most dynamic economy in the world', and the Third Principle stresses 'the Emirates' foreign policy [as] a tool that aims to serve our higher national goals, the most important of which is the Emirates' economic interests'. The Fifth Principle states another foreign-policy objective as '[t]he geographical, social and cultural position of the country in its region is the first line of defence for its security, safety and its future development. Developing stable and positive political, economic and social relations with its neighbours is one of the most important priorities of the country's foreign policy'.

The Seventh Principle highlights the UAE's ambitions to excel in new technologies as a global hub of innovation: 'The digital, technical and scientific excellence of the Emirates will define its development and economic frontiers. The consolidation of its position as a global hub for talent, companies and investments in these sectors will make it a future global leader.' The Eighth Principle highlights 'the core value system in the Emirates based on openness and tolerance, the preservation of rights, the rule of justice and the law … the preservation of human dignity, the respect for cultural diversity, the strengthening of human fraternity', while the Ninth Principle describes 'the Emirates' foreign humanitarian aid [as] an essential part of its vision and moral duty towards less fortunate peoples'. Finally, the Tenth Principle concludes the listing with one other foreign policy objective: 'Calling for peace, harmony, negotiations and dialogue to resolve all disputes is the basis of the Emirates' foreign policy. Striving with regional partners and global friends to establish regional and global peace and stability is a fundamental driver of our foreign policy' (UAE Government Portal 2021).[1]

In June 2021, the UAE was elected to sit on the UN Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member for the 2022–3 term. Since the beginning, the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the UN led by Lana Nusseibeh has focused on 'stronger united commitments' in alignment with the themes promoted by the UAE nation-branding project and the Principles of the 50, including peace promotion through women's empowerment, climate change, growth and resilience building, peace and security, and technological innovation in the Middle East and beyond (UAEUN 2022).

Once again, Emirati humanitarianism occupies a central position in discourse at the crossroads of the UAE commitments to the UN: 'As a relatively young country, we are uniquely positioned to help developing countries achieve their own visions for growth, which has led us to become a major donor to economic development and humanitarian response. As a commercial and creative melting pot in a global transit hub, we want to help nations work together to seize the opportunities of technology in order to achieve human progress' (UAEUN 2022). There have been signals of a major shift in UAE foreign policy away from the militaristic orientation that has been pursued since the early 2000s to a commitment to economic interests and national security through collaboration, mediation and diplomacy with foes as well as friends since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Kerr & England 2021). The Principles of the 50 suggest such a shift in rhetoric, and the military withdrawal/disengagement from Yemen, Eritrea and Somalia seems to support that argument in real life. On the other hand, Ardemagni (2021) points out that maritime security is one of the subtler agendas that the UAE is committed to at the UNSC, and she further argues that the recent recalibration in foreign policy signals a rather complex approach that the UAE takes to balance continuing power ambitions in the Arabian Peninsula's maritime straits with an international image favouring institutionalised efforts of cooperation, dialog and diplomacy. The UAE has recently been the most generous donor of humanitarian aid to Yemen, Eritrea and Somalia, and how the UAE's humanitarian diplomacy priorities will be affected by this new direction in foreign policy is yet to be seen.

Nation-branding seeks to achieve multiple goals in the UAE context, including not only designing a reputable, reliable and marketable/profitable country image for the outside world, but also setting the norms and values of the ongoing nation-building and state consolidation processes for domestic politics. While branding for the outside world aims to challenge the cultural, social and political stereotypes about the UAE, branding for domestic politics is crucial to define the official discourse for national unification and nation-building at home (Jeong 2020). The Sixth Principle of the 50 promotes that particular aspect of nation-branding through mobilising entrepreneurial potential of the nation: 'Consolidating the reputation of the Emirates globally is a national mission for all institutions. The Emirates is one destination for business, tourism, industry, investment and cultural excellence. Our national institutions must unify their efforts, benefiting mutually from their shared capabilities, and work to build global enterprises under the umbrella of the Emirates' (UAE Government Portal 2021). Having humanitarianism as one of the 10 foremost principles written by the government on the 50th anniversary of the young monarchy to guide the country for the next 50 years is a strategic move to distinguish the UAE from the rest of the Middle East and the Global South.

The new Emirati humanitarianism envisages the global status of the UAE aligned with the ten Principles of the 50, as 1) an aid provider nation as opposed to an aid receiver, that is committed to diplomacy and dialog in its foreign policy (the Fifth and the Tenth Principles); 2) a stable liberal country of the rule of law (the Eighth Principle) that can be trusted with international humanitarian logistics under the authority of the Dubai IHC; and 3) a forward-looking agenda setter through organisation of international humanitarian summits, events and conferences (the Sixth and the Seventh Principles) (e.g., the Dubai-based World Government Summit Organisation and DIHAD-Dubai International Humanitarian Aid and Development Conference and Exhibition). Humanitarianism appears to be at the centre of a national agenda concerning foreign policy, economic interests and future prospects of the country.

The recent Covid-19 crisis has given the UAE another fresh opportunity to polish its nation-brand in the international humanitarian landscape, capitalising on the reality that the old, established OECD donors and the international organisations that they have traditionally dominated failed or were absent in addressing the Covid-19 crisis within and beyond national borders (Gong 2021). During the early phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UAE not only demonstrated state competence and flexibility in dealing with the pandemic at home, but also proved its relevance and significance in international humanitarian supply chains mobilising its financial, logistical and strategic resources to dispatch medical aid to its neighbours and the more distant corners of the world much faster than many other traditional donors in the Global North. The UAE's strategically crafted humanitarian diplomacy as soft power to advance the country's political and economic interests through aid has been evident in medical and food aid sent to the countries with whom the UAE has had challenging foreign relations as well (e.g., Syria, Lebanon and Iran).

Aid during the pandemic has been instrumental in restoring relations with these Arab and Muslim majority regimes and governments by (re)opening diplomatic spaces to communicate and strengthening leverage at the expense of the other rivals in geopolitics (e.g., Turkey in Syria). The UAE has also taken initiatives to contribute to vaccine production for the Global South, which is in line with the country's historical commitment to the South-South solidarity, 21st-century strategic plans to fill in the gaps in the international humanitarian regime where the western/northern nations are absent and further interest in humanitarianism as business and for profit (Alexander & Mazzucco 2021). Recent decades have been marked by the failures of the international humanitarian regime – also evidenced by the failures of the western/northern governments during the recent Covid-19 pandemic – as much as the encroachment of neoliberal governance in the Global South. Three intertwined international processes or trends that have shaped the new Emirati humanitarianism since early 2000s can be identified and will be discussed in the following sections.

DEVELOPMENT AND RESILIENCE-FOCUSED HUMANITARIANISM

The first international trend is evident in the UN-backed agenda of resilience-building in the general populations and among the 'people of concern' in the Global South to reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance (Duffield 2012, 2016 & 2019).

Also, associated with the second trend discussed below, this kind of policy orientation around the concept of resilience is a repercussion of the declining western/northern interest in direct and invasive involvement with the humanitarian spaces (especially after the failed humanitarian wars in Afghanistan and Iraq), and it resonates with the increasingly popular trend of thinking about humanitarian aid as auxiliary to development aid. The resilience discourse appears to be a 21st-century development agenda around the concept of social entrepreneurship, promising profit and self-sufficiency to the 'people of concern' with capitalist creativity, yet Duffield (2016) argues that it is nothing more than survivalism. The UAE has not only adopted the language of resilience in the development aid policy, but has also redesigned its approach to humanitarian aid within the broader context of development aid. The concept of resilience is incorporated into the UAE's development aid agenda targeting African countries, Small Island Development States (SIDS) and Least Developing Countries, as well as the UAE's humanitarian aid agenda concerning refugees and other groups of 'people of concern', especially in areas of climate related emergency relief (e.g., capacity building for social and economic resilience to natural disasters in SIDs), emergency education (e.g., psychological resilience programs for Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Greece), and income-generation (e.g., economic resilience through entrepreneurship among Uganda refugees) (MoFA&IC 2017b, 2018 & 2019). Further, the UAE's humanitarian aid has been aligned with development aid as well as the UAE's recent political engagements in the Middle East and Africa. In fact, a 2017 foreign-aid report by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Collaboration (2017b: 67) mentions 'the increasingly integrated focus of UAE aid on humanitarian and development aid nexus' justifying that development prospects are undermined in humanitarian contexts of fragility and conflict where humanitarian crises tend to happen; therefore, development goals overlap with humanitarian needs.

The UAE aid records demonstrate strategic partnership with the UN and systematic policy efforts in line with the UN's SDGs guiding and informing the UAE humanitarian aid policy. Throughout a variety of UAE foreign-aid reports, commitment to international humanitarian principles and adherence to the UN's SDGs are reiterated. The significance of harmonising the goals of humanitarian aid with those of development aid is emphasised. Official reports highlight the UAE's commitment to the 'best international practices' established by the organisations and initiatives led by the northern/western donors, indicating what Donini and Ziadeh argue to be 'mimicking' or 'mirroring' the western norms and behaviour in their claimed space of aid intervention: 'International principles and best practices will guide the UAE's assistance … The New Deal for Engagement in the Fragile States will guide its work with fragile or conflict-affected states' (MoFA&IC 2017a:12), '[t]he UAE's humanitarian assistance strategy combines the direct emergency response, through strengthening the global human order, and relying on the OECD-DAC's principles of good humanitarian donorship' (MoFA&IC 2019: 18). Of the UAE's total foreign assistance, 88 per cent was directed towards achieving eight of the 17 SDGs in 2017 (MoFA&IC 2017b). Between 2016 and 2019, 84 per cent of the UAE's foreign assistance was targeted towards achieving 10 selected SDGs, including SDG1-No Poverty; SDG5-Gender Equality; SDG16-Peace Justice and Strong Institutions, among the others (MoFA&IC 2019).

The UAE's commitment to the UN's SDGs has been a defining aspect of its collaborations with multilateral entities and international organisations (e.g., OCHA, the UNDP's FFS, the WFP, the UN's Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, the WHO and the IFRC) for humanitarian intervention in areas concerning poverty, refugees, emergency health and emergency education (MoFA&IC 2017, 2018, 2019).

In recent years, Yemen and Syria have been given priority in UAE foreign assistance, with most of the assistance provided mapped to the UN's SDGs including humanitarian aid (MoFA&IC 2019: 50). In January 2022, Dubai EXPO and the UN co-organised a series of conferences in Dubai during the 'Global Goals Week' with a focus on the SDGs. In one of the panels, titled 'How Islam Inspires Sustainable Development in the Region and the World', the speakers concurred not only on the compatibility of the Islamic values and tenets with the underlying principles of the SDGs, but also on the potential that the alignment of Islam with SDGs presents for the much-needed social, cultural and economic change in the Muslim-majority world that is overrepresented in the global statistics on poverty, illiteracy, state-failure and refugees (UN Web TV 2022). As an Islamic donor nation enthusiastic about being involved in setting international agendas concerning the Arab and Muslim societies, the UAE is well aware of the role that it can play and the areas of influence that it can assert its leverage to have say in agenda setting and policy implementation. Indeed, the UAE has been vigorously highlighting its Arab Islamic heritage as part of a nation-branding policy for domestic politics and for beneficiaries in the developing world, more specifically the Arabic-speaking and Muslim-majority world. [2] Particularly in recent years, the UAE has assumed the role of the rightful benefactor of Arab and Muslim majority nations in 'fragility' within the broader international regime of aid, and claims a space of aid intervention capitalising on the decades-long violence, exploitation, mistrust and negligence that defined the relations between the western donors and the nations in the Arab and Muslim-majority world: '[t]he welfare of all the countries in this region, and of their citizens, is a key priority of the UAE. Other donors have been neglecting the region, and the UAE, unlike most other donors, shares a common culture and language with most countries of the region' (MoFA&IC 2017a: 14).

The discourse of 'stabilisation in the 'fragile' states' is prevalent, with an emphasis on 'neglected and forgotten humanitarian crises in the Arab Muslim Middle East' in a 2017 UAE policy report summarising projections for the next five years (2017–21): 'Many of the UAE's partner countries will be fragile and conflict-affected states … The majority of the UAE's country programs will be in the Middle East and Arab World' (MoFA&IC 2017a: 13–14).

The Arab Middle East is not the only geographical focus of UAE humanitarian diplomacy, the 2020 DIHAD Conference that had been planned to be about aid to Africa was rescheduled to take place in 2021 with a revised focus on 'Humanitarian Aid in the times of Covid-19: Focus on Africa' given the current pandemic. The Conference was well-attended by representatives from the WHO, the UNCHR, OCHA, the UN Population Fund, the WFP, the European Union, European international NGOs including MSF, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the IFRC, the Norwegian Refugee Council and SPARK (all represented on the DIHAD advisory board), African organisations including African Migration and Development Policy Center, Action Africa Help International and Safari Doctors. There were a few familiar themes across the panels including the humanitarian-development nexus, resilience, entrepreneurship and innovation. From and Emirati point of view, DIHAD 2021 was important to assert the interest of the UAE in 'conflict-ridden' and 'fragile' Africa as an aid donor, to present the competency of the UAE in pandemic management as a model state and to showcase the logistics capacity of the UAE to dispatch development, humanitarian and medical aid to Africa and the rest of the world.

Building on the previous year's conference agenda, DIHAD 2022 is scheduled to take place in March 2022 with a specific focus on 10 of the UN's 17 SDGs through the lens of SDG17 – 'SDG17; Partnership and Cooperation for Sustainable Development'. Gerhard Putman-Cramer, the CEO of the Geneva-Based DIHAD Sustainable Humanitarian Foundation, points out that DIHAD 2022 will build on the work completed by the UN's flagship platform, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, that followed up and reviewed the 17 SDGs in 2021: 'The pandemic has duly put the spotlight on the crucial role of global partnerships, SDG17. It is the realisation of the importance of partnerships and global cooperation that has led the International Advisory Board to decide that the DIHAD 2022 event would focus on SDG17, "Partnerships for the Goals"' (DIHAD 2022). DIHAD 2022 conference program highlights the alignment of the UAE's humanitarian and development aid with the priorities of the western/northern governments and intergovernmental organisations, and further presents the UAE's interest to be a hub in the Arab Middle East for showcasing the UN agendas in mega-events convening governmental, non-governmental, corporate/business and social entrepreneurial actors together. DIHAD 2022 will start off with an OCHA organised workshop in March 2022, 'Towards A Global Revitalised Multi–Stakeholders Partnership for SDGs: The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Collaboration/The HDP 'Nexus" (UN OCHA Pre-Conference Workshop 2022). Indeed, with 'peace', 'security' is also meant:

> The overall ambition of the Nexus approach, the Humanitarian-Development and Peace Collaboration is to reduce humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability. Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors recognise that development assistance has to be scaled up in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, especially with the increasing humanitarian needs and diminishing resources to address them; they need to better connect their joint analysis, planning and programming with longer term development efforts. (UN OCHA Pre-Conference Workshop 2022)

The HDP Nexus has been popular recently among the traditional donors and policy-makers based on the assumption that protracted conflicts cannot be completely resolved, therefore foreign interventions should aim at conflict management, rather than conflict-resolution, reducing humanitarian needs, risks for crisis and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in those regions of the world bridging the 'silos' of humanitarianism, development and peace (Weishaupt 2020, also UN OCHA Pre-Conference Workshop). The HDP Nexus requires a multilateral humanitarian system (i.e., 'multi-stakeholders partnerships') including governments, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and the private sector. Weishaupt (2020: 8) delineates the problems with the HDP Nexus and discusses the potential for failure given the ambiguities with conceptualisations and definitions drawing on DuBois (2020):

> In addition to the ideological differences within the three silos, and the difficulty this diversity holds for conceptualising gaps and linkages between silos, a lack of definitional clarity is also apparent on an overarching level. Whether the HDP nexus implies collaboration, coordination, alignment, complementarity, fusion, something else or all the above to varying degrees has not been generally determined. (DuBois 2020: 6)

Annual DIHAD Conferences have always reflected the current and upcoming UAE approaches to aid, and DIHAD 2022 is likely to proclaim the UAE's future commitment in its humanitarian diplomacy to the UN's recently popular HDP Nexus. Embracing this newly formulated policy agenda, the HDP Nexus is again likely to change the Emirati approaches to humanitarian aid and intervention – but the implications are yet to be seen.

DISTANT MANAGEMENT AND REMOTE CONTROL OF CONFLICT ZONES

The second international trend that has played an important role in the UAE's elevated position in the new international humanitarian regime is associated with the different nature of the western/northern engagement with the spaces of humanitarianism in the 21st century through distant management and remote control of the conflict zones as a result of, what Duffield (2016: 149) sees as, 'policy failure, political push-back and humanitarian access denial' that marked the 1990s and early 2000s. Incorporation of the re-emerging donors from the Middle East such as the UAE (Qatar and Turkey, for that matter as well) into the western/northern-dominated humanitarian landscape is important for the traditional western/northern Donors to (re)gain legitimacy on the ground in Arab and Muslim-majority regions of conflicts and crises. It is noteworthy that the western/northern traditional humanitarian donors, including the UN organisations, European states and the European Union, the ICRC and MSF are the closest international partners of the UAE, both in humanitarian operations and organisation of summits, events and conferences that set the agendas for international humanitarian policy and diplomacy. Therefore, parallel to the recent western distant or remote approaches to humanitarian spaces, there has been the rise of the UAE as a politically ambitious 'nexus state' with geostrategic resources to offer on the humanitarian stage by facilitating the neoliberal governance of the conflict zones since 2000s. Building on Afshin Molavi's description, Henderson (2017) argues that the UAE is not a small vulnerable microstate, but rather a 'nexus state' committed to achieving economic diversification and attaining international relevance as evidenced by its highly-sophisticated transport and logistics sector.

He also argues that the logistics sector is one of the areas of cooperation, as opposed to a decades-long competition since the foundation of the country, between the seven Emirates to push for a unified foreign policy. Drawing on the same concept of 'nexus state', Ziadeh (2019) argues that the UAE is a 'nexus state' through which internationalised commercial, military and humanitarian logistics spaces overlap and supply chains of the respective domains are interconnected. Accordingly, the UAE has capitalised on 1) the incorporation of humanitarian aid into supply chain capitalism; and 2) the inclusion of the 'islands of stability' (like the UAE as its nation-brand is marketed) close to the conflict zones into neoliberal humanitarian logistics practices that prioritise cost minimisation, returns on donor investments, supply-chain efficiency and privatisation (e.g., private logistics firms in charge of humanitarian aid logistics, and other private companies as manufacturers of goods and services used in humanitarian operations) (Ziadeh 2019). The Dubai IHC, born with the merging of Dubai Aid City and Dubai Humanitarian City in 2003, has been serving that kind of a strategic role in this growing geopolitical complexity of the international humanitarian architecture with its proximity to the conflict zones in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

As of 2022, the IHC is the largest humanitarian logistics hub in the world, and houses 68 humanitarian organisations (i.e., UN organisations, other intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and foundations) and 19 commercial companies (i.e., manufacturers and suppliers of products and logistics services needed in humanitarian operations), and their offices, showrooms and warehouses (IHC 2022). Apart from the 19 commercial companies based in the IHC, three Dubai-based corporations stand out in logistics operations for the IHC: Emirates Cargo, DP (Dubai Ports) World and Dubai Airports (IHC Annual Report 2020).

The IHC supports partnerships with private and for-profit enterprises including foreign logistics and transport companies, and declares its commitment to the UN's SDGs, more specifically SDG17, 'as a platform for partnership, innovation and knowledge sharing' (IHC Annual Report 2019: 6). Innovation is a reoccurring theme in recent humanitarian-themed events planned as part of the Dubai-based World Government Summit, the DIHAD Conference and Exhibition and EXPO 2020. The World Government Summit is one of the mega events that take place in Dubai annually in partnership with the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the World Trade Organisation, the OECD and various national and international corporations. The most popular urgent global social, economic and environmental issues are addressed every year through development, business and growth-oriented agendas promoted by the actors discussed here with references to trending topics such as SDGs, sustainability, innovation, digital and emerging technologies and resilience. On February 11, 2018, under the patronage of the IHC, Humanitarian Logistics Databank (HLD) was launched as 'a pioneering platform to revolutionise the global relief efforts' at the World Government Summit in Dubai (IHC News 2018). The letter of Intent was signed by the representatives from OCHA, WFP, WHO, IFRC, UNICEF and UNHCR (IHL 2022). Humanitarian Logistics Databank (HLD) is a digital platform built by the IHC to keep automated tracking of quantity, ownership, location and movement of humanitarian aid based on customs data, to facilitate communication and cooperation between different international humanitarian actors to respond to the humanitarian needs in the most efficient and effective manner and to minimise the aid delivery delays and logistics costs associated with the uncertainties in humanitarian crisis situations (IHC News 2018, IHC 2022).

The HLD represents a 21st-century trend of remote controlling and digitalisation in humanitarian operations, and is expected to cater to a broader humanitarian community as the other humanitarian hubs in the world are gradually added to the database.

INNOVATION INFATUATION: NEW/DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Intertwined with the previous trend, the third international trend is the introduction of new/digital/virtual technologies to international humanitarian spaces and practices. Burns (2019) argues that digital technologies reinforce market-based rationalities that prioritise branding, efficiency and a 'bottom line' logic in neoliberal transformation/neoliberalisation in international humanitarianism. While branding refers to a marketable, commercial, potentially profitable image for the humanitarian corporate entities, efficiency requires technological capacity to collect and analyse data to minimise the operational costs and maximize the impact of humanitarian operations, and bottom line implies the equivalence of the notion of saving lives to the business logic of profit maximisation (i.e., maximisation of the number of lives saved in quantitative assessment of humanitarian operations) (Burns 2019). Further, the literature suggests that new and digital technologies introduced to the humanitarian landscape for efficiency and impact purposes are likely to create deeper dependencies on the private sector including logistics firms and commercial technology providers and contribute to already existing hierarchies among the nation-states empowering the ones with resources at the expense of the other states and non-state actors (Burns 2019, Ziadeh 2019, Seyedsayamdost & Vanderwal 2020).

The HLD of the Dubai IHC has been launched with similar rationalities as 'a pioneering platform to revolutionise the global relief efforts' (IHC News 2018) promising a technologically enhanced logistics hub with data-driven efficiency and quantifiable impact on humanitarian crisis in the Middle East and beyond. On UNCHR signing a letter of intent with the IHC, Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, stated how new and unique the HLD was in the globalising world of humanitarianism: '[HLD] will help the United Nations and the NGO partners do something we were never able to do before; track stocks and shipments of vital relief items together in real time, so that we can respond to compelling humanitarian needs in a quicker, more coordinated, more effective way.' Mark Lowcock, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and the Head of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs, noted the expected impact of the HLD on the humanitarian operations: 'help will get to the people in need, faster, more cheaply, more lives will be saved, suffering will be relieved' (IHC 2022). While the two UN officials declared their trust in this new digital platform with quantifiable efficiency and impact that it promises for humanitarian aid distribution, the IHC has gone from being the largest logistics hub in the Middle East to the largest logistics hub in the world in just a few years. While the IHC is a non-profit free-zone authority, all logistics services are privatised and undertaken by private Dubai-based (e.g., Aramax, Emirates Cargo, DP World, Dubai Airports) and foreign firms (e.g., German DHL, Belgian Alpinter). The IHC's latest annual reports provide no analysis regarding the HLD's contribution to the efficiency of the IHC operations or the impact on humanitarian crises; therefore, whether the HLD lives up to expectations is yet to be seen.

With a similar national ambition, the HOPE Consortium of Abu Dhabi has been initiated by the Department of Health to 'revolutionise' vaccine distribution supply chain during the Covid-19 pandemic. The HOPE Consortium operates on Abu Dhabi's sophisticated logistics infrastructure and draws on the capital city's existing expertise in humanitarian logistics, yet is more specifically focused on vaccine distribution with an explicitly industrial/commercial mission fused with humanitarian responsibility and philanthropic sentiments. Covid-19 has revealed the weaknesses of global supply chains and international logistics infrastructure around the world. As the WHO proposed mass vaccination to be the only and most effective life-saving strategy to adopt by the public authorities, cold supply chains for vaccines have been needed for safe transportation and distribution from the manufacturers to the people all around the world. The UAE has strategically decided to target the distant corners of the world in the Global South that are disadvantaged in terms of access and neglected by the northern/western governments. The HOPE Consortium, led by the Department of Health in Abu Dhabi, is a collective of mostly Abu-Dhabi-based private logistics firms with wide-ranging capacities supported by integrated and digital technologies. The Consortium provides a 'secure, transparent and on-time delivery of vaccines through blockchain-enabled end-to-end tracking technology to digitally manage, track and deliver across the entire cold chain supply ensuring temperature-controlled compliance from production to patient' (HOPE Consortium 2022).

On March 29–30, 2021, the Consortium organised 'the World Immunisation & Logistics Summit', which was attended by high-profile representatives from international government organisations, international NGOs, academia, governments and private firms, with the WHO, Novavax, UNICEF, the WFP, the ICRC, foreign logistics firms (e.g., UPS, FedEx, Hellman, SkyCell, IATA, Kuehne+Nagal) and UAE-based logistics firms (e.g., Aramax, Etihad Aviation, Abu Dhabi Ports) standing out, to discuss challenges of vaccine mobilisation and solutions to achieve worldwide, equitable, cost-effective, fast vaccine distribution. Multiple panels at the Summit addressed the role and importance of digital and integrated technologies for what is called 'supply chain integrity' (HOPE Consortium 2022). Within the past few years, the UAE has been investing in new industrial and digital technologies in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi to enhance their logistics capabilities to be a frontrunner in humanitarian supply chain as well as medical and pharmaceutical supply chains, and to claim a strategic position in international logistics sector and supply chain capitalism. Its efforts also demonstrate the close-knitted relations between the UAE government, the UAE-based private firms and the most influential western/northern international government organisations, international NGOs and the western/northern-based private firms. Indeed, technologically enhanced logistical capabilities help the UAE gain visibility and reliability for public and private partnerships with the western/northern world in the increasingly hierarchical, digitalised and remote controlling, and commercialised international humanitarian architecture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Donors such as the UAE that are (re)-emerging in the sphere of international humanitarianism in policy compliance with the traditional donors and western/northern states do not challenge the (neo)liberal governance of the Global South; rather, they contribute to 'governing the borderlands' in accordance with it (Duffield 2001). This article distinguishes between the old Emirati humanitarianism between the 1970s and the 2000s and the new Emirati humanitarianism since the beginning of the 21st century. The new Emirati humanitarianism of the 21st century is a modernised, institutionalised and rationalised version of the earlier Emirati humanitarianism and is part of a broader national quest for international recognition of the UAE by the western humanitarian actors and acknowledgment of the UAE's leverage and presence, especially in those areas of policy and action concerning the Arab and Muslim-majority world, by the multiplying number of governmental, non-governmental and private actors in the realm of international humanitarianism that continues to be dominated by the western/northern states. New Emirati humanitarianism also represents a shift towards political assertiveness in the UAE's foreign policy and alignment of the Emirati humanitarian diplomacy with the US-led western/northern-designed market-oriented (neo)liberal norms, discourses and practices of humanitarianism targeting the Global South.[3] Indeed, UAE's humanitarian diplomacy demonstrates a keen interest in seeking power and presence in an increasingly internationalised context of war-making and peace-making, asserting the country's 'nation brand' through mobilisation of geostrategic resources with policy tools, technologies and discourses inherited from the northern/western world.

ENDNOTES

[1] The 'Principles of the 50' are 10 principles that act as guidelines for all institutions in the UAE as the country approaches a new phase of development over the next 50 years. The principles are part of the 'Projects of the 50' campaign, to chart the strategic roadmap for the UAE's new era of economic, political and social growth. The First Principle: The key national focus will remain the strengthening of the union, its institutions, legislature, capabilities and finances. The development of the urban and rural economies throughout the nation is the fastest and most effective way to consolidate the union of the Emirates. The Second Principle: We will strive over the upcoming period to build the best and most dynamic economy in the world. The economic development of the country is the supreme national interest, and all state institutions, in all fields and across different federal and local levels, will bear the responsibility of building the best global economic environment and maintaining the gains achieved over the past 50 years. The Third Principle: The Emirates' foreign policy is a tool that aims to serve our higher national goals, the most important of which is the Emirates' economic interests. The goal of our political approach is to serve the economy, and the goal of the economy is to provide a better life for the people of the Union. The Fourth Principle: The main future driver for growth is human capital. Developing the educational system, recruiting talent, retaining specialists and continuously building skills will be key to ensuring the Emirates remains the most competitive national economy. The Fifth Principle: Good neighbourliness is the basis of stability. The geographical, social and cultural position of the country in its region is the first line of defence for its security, safety and its future development. Developing stable and positive political, economic and social relations with its neighbours is one of the most important priorities of the country's foreign policy. The Sixth Principle: Consolidating the reputation of the Emirates globally is a national mission for all institutions. The Emirates is one destination for business, tourism, industry, investment and cultural excellence. Our national institutions must unify their efforts, benefiting mutually from their shared capabilities, and work to build global enterprises under the umbrella of the Emirates. The Seventh Principle: The digital, technical and scientific excellence of the Emirates will define its development and economic frontiers. The consolidation of its position as a global hub for talent, companies and investments in these sectors will make it a future global leader. The Eighth Principle: The core value system in the Emirates will remain based on openness and tolerance, the preservation of rights, the rule of justice and the law. We believe in the preservation of human dignity, the respect for cultural diversity, the strengthening of human fraternity, together with enduring respect for our national identity.

The country will remain supportive, through its foreign policy, of all initiatives, pledges and international organisations that promote peace, openness and humanity. The Ninth Principle: The Emirates' foreign humanitarian aid is an essential part of its vision and moral duty towards less fortunate peoples. Our foreign humanitarian aid is not tied to religion, race, colour or culture. Political disagreement with any country should not justify failing to provide relief to that country in cases of disasters, emergencies and crises. The Tenth Principle: Calling for peace, harmony, negotiations and dialogue to resolve all disputes is the basis of the Emirates' foreign policy. Striving with regional partners and global friends to establish regional and global peace and stability is a fundamental driver of our foreign policy. See https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/initiatives-of-the-next-50/the-principles-of-the-50.

[2] Article 12 of the 1971 UAE Constitution resolutely mentions the Arab Islamic orientation in Emirati foreign policy, but with respect to the principles and ideals represented by the UN: 'The foreign policy of the UAE shall be directed towards supporting the Arab and Islamic causes and interests and towards establishing closer friendship and co-operation with all the nations and peoples on the basis of the principles of the charter of the United Nations Organisation and international ideals' (Federal National Council 2010). While Article 12 of the Constitution sheds light on the underlying values at the core of the nation-branding, the UAE has been strategically balancing its international standing regarding the 'brothers' in the Arab Islamic world and the 'friends' in the western world to pursue pragmatic foreign policy goals since the early days of the country.

[3] Although the 10th (and the last) Principle of the 50 announced in 2021 signifies a more diplomatic orientation in the future 'calling for peace, harmony, negotiations and dialogue to resolve all disputes [as] the basis of the Emirates' foreign policy' (UAE Government Portal 2021).

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