



جامعة خليفة
Khalifa University

The Effects of Soft Power Initiatives on the UAE's Bilateral Relations

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MA. Thesis

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A thesis submitted to Khalifa University of Science and Technology in accordance with the requirements of the degree the degree of Master of Arts in International and Civil Security in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences.



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by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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at

Khalifa University

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Abstract

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This research aims to focus on the effects of soft power initiatives on the UAE bilateral relations, and the nation’s global brand positioning. The main concept under consideration is the UAE Soft Power Strategy, as launched by the UAE Government, and the expected outcome from this strategy. The significance of this thesis is in relation to the high amounts of investment towards Soft Power strategies, while there is no actual measure as to whether these investments actually produce a high return on investment and achieve the pursued outcomes by government officials. Accordingly, this thesis will seek to identify the return on investment on the multiple initiatives launched under the umbrella of the soft power strategy and will evaluate whether it has increased the UAE’s bilateral relations. In doing so, the thesis will provide the first in-depth analysis and description of the UAE’s Soft Power Strategy, as created, implemented and changed over time.


In addition, the main research objective of this thesis is to determine the relationship between the application of soft power and increased bilateral relations with different states. Accordingly, the research question asks, “To what extent does the UAE’s application of soft power initiatives contribute to and generate improved bilateral relations with targeted states?” The explanatory nature of the research question will test the relation between the UAE’s application of soft power initiatives, and the improved bilateral relations with targeted states (Which will be identified within the study). Furthermore, based on the literature review gathered and analyzed, the study will test the main hypothesis: “The UAE’s application of soft power initiatives directly contributes to and generates improved bilateral relations with targeted states.”

Indexing Terms: UAE, soft power, bilateral relations, measure of effectiveness, international security, regional security

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Khalifa University of Science and Technology. The work is entirely my own except where indicated by special reference in the text. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of Khalifa University of Science and Technology. No part of the thesis has been presented to any other university for any degree.

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Date: November 2020

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Context to the topic and research problem description

Many states over the past decade have realized the importance of using soft power in regard to their foreign policy strategies in order to increase bilateral relations. States have created multiple strategies in regard to using soft power tactics to influence other states and international organizations, without having to use hard power or coercion. According to Joseph Nye (2018: p. 157), “If a state can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes.” States are now focusing on building their Nation Brands, sharing their cultural story, building a replicable institutional model, it is all about marketing your state and other nations wanting to franchise your model in their state/government (Nye, 2018). During the past, states competed on who had the most hard/military power, which was measured through a state’s military power. Measuring a state’s hard power was an easy measure, as it focused mainly on the amount of weaponry, soldiers, ships and aircraft, and the technologies states may incorporate within their military forces (Treverton & Jones, 2005). On the other hand, measuring a state’s soft power is not as easy, as soft power initiatives are usually not acquired as products or can be measured as a unit (Nye, 1990: p. 157). The increased use of soft power has led to more government expenditure on various initiatives which target other states in order to improve bilateral relations and, correspondingly, strengthen the influence of the state behind the soft power initiatives. However, without actual measures such as key performance indicators (KPIs) and data related to the soft power project, it is extremely difficult to evaluate whether these initiatives have produced the desired outcomes. In addition, even with evidence of indicators that may measure improved bilateral relations such as MOUs or official exchanges, attempting to actually arrive at a figure or percentage of improved relations may be impossible. This, however, remains to be proven and forms a secondary research question of this thesis.

The UAE in particular has developed various initiatives related to soft power, the state has also actively enabled strategies and policies that create a well-rounded foundation to develop the country’s soft power (Ardemagni, 2019). The UAE Soft Power Strategy focuses on developing the state’s global reputation and highlight the identity, heritage, culture and contributions of the UAE (Gulf News, 2017). The aim of the strategy is for the UAE to become gateway for the region, focusing on turning the UAE into a tolerant and modern country that welcomes everyone from across the globe. In particular, the main of the UAE Government in incorporating soft power initiatives is to increase bilateral relations, and for the UAE to increase its influence and presence through the use of soft power strategies. Given its goals and the sheer amount of money, time and effort the UAE has invested over the past few years in these initiatives, there is an immense need to examine the extent to

which the UAE's application of its soft power initiatives contributes to or generates improved bilateral relations and increased influence for the UAE. While soft power is famously difficult to measure, this thesis, in effect, will attempt to do exactly that, thus adding immensely to the literature on soft power in international relations and, at the same time, providing a much-needed contextual analysis of the UAE's Soft Power Initiatives, to date. While it may be impossible to actually measure the extent of improved bilateral relations between the UAE and a specific country, this thesis will, at the very least, arrive at an answer as to whether this is possible or not. In doing so, the thesis will begin to answer questions about whether the strategies put in place and the initiatives developed have enhanced the UAE's soft power, therefore producing the intended outcomes. In addition, what unintended outcomes have surfaced.

Key Terms:

- **Power:** According to the international relations theory, power is defined as the ability to do things and control others (Nye, 1990: p. 154). It is often sub-divided into hard power (guns, soldiers, GDP) and soft power. In this thesis, the focus is on the UAE's soft power, its soft power initiatives and the measurement of thereof.
- **Soft Power:** An approach in international relations theories defined as a state's ability to persuade other states to do what it wants without using force or coercion. Soft power usually includes cultural and economic influence. In addition, Nye (2004) defines soft power as the ability to use positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy goals. He focuses on three main pillars which include Political Values, Culture, and Foreign Policies (Nye, 2004). Which is a concept that is related to the UAE's definition of Soft Power.
- **UAE Soft Power Strategy:** A strategy launched by the leadership of the UAE Government, in order to increase the country's global reputation, through focusing on the culture, identity, and contributions of the UAE to the world.
- **Hard Power:** the use of military or other forms of hard power to influence other states. According to Wilson (2008, p. 114), hard power is defined as the ability of a country to coerce another country through the use of military power, or economic power which include sanctions.
- **Nation Brand:** An application of a marketing theory to countries, where states build a nation brand to create a global reputation through branding and initiatives that aim to attract tourism and trade to a country.

- **Bilateral Relations:** Political, cultural, and/or economic relations between two states. The UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs defines bilateral relations as an ability for the UAE to strengthen its relations with different states and international organizations, through different sectors such as trade, tourism, education, and medical.
- **KPIs:** Key performance indicators, which is a measurable value to identify how well a strategy is doing, and it is often used to measure success of certain initiatives.

1.2 Problem statement and its significance

The UAE has expended great efforts and expense in establishing itself as a soft power within the region and internationally. It has invested huge amounts of time, effort and money on soft power initiatives that are executed across the globe, from Uzbekistan to Jordan to Egypt as it seeks to strengthen its bilateral relations with various states through its soft power initiatives. Despite four years of work, however, there exists no accurate measurement of the UAE's soft power "stock." We do not know whether the UAE has achieved the outcomes it has so tirelessly executed through the application of soft power initiatives. In short, has the UAE gained a return on its investments through the strengthening of bilateral relations with various states?

The significance of the problem statement is in relation to the high amount of investments by the UAE Government to increase soft power initiatives, and the actual outcome of these investments, whether they benefit the UAE and strengthen bilateral relations with different states. Determining the actual impact of the programs, policies and initiatives in terms of the UAE's global positioning and its international relations and reputation will greatly assist UAE government agencies as they decide the best course of action to take vis-à-vis future applications of the soft power initiatives in order to meet aspired goals. Accordingly, this research aims to identify to what extent does the application of soft power initiatives in the UAE, contribute to or generate improved bilateral relations. In turn, by developing and applying measures of effectiveness to the UAE's soft power initiatives, this thesis will greatly add to the existing IR literature on soft power. This literature is voluminous, but we are no closer today in terms of reaching a consensus on how best to measure a state's soft power. It is hoped this thesis will greatly assist and add to this endeavor. Lastly, the thesis will answer a secondary but highly important research question: To what extent can outcomes be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan? In other words, can measurements actually be applied and arrived at or not. Or is soft power simply too nebulous a concept with too many indicators and intervening variables to measure. Despite a possible negative answer, this does not necessarily call into question the UAE's Soft Power Initiative. Rather, it may engender a rethinking of measurement strategies as well as tactics used to improve bilateral relations, thus improving the overall performance and efficacy of the initiative.

1.3 Research objectives

The primary research objective of this study is to evaluate the relationship between the UAE's development and application of its soft power initiatives and the desired effect: strengthened bilateral relations with various states. The thesis will necessarily focus on case studies since the researcher does not have the ability or time required to pursue a full-scale study in terms of measuring the strengthening (or not) of the UAE's bilateral relations with states targeted as part of its soft power initiatives. This will be explained in greater detail below and in chapter 3. In addition, and separate but related to the main research objective, the thesis will answer questions related to whether or not outcomes can be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan. This is an important secondary question for the reasons discussed above. The case studies of Jordan and Uzbekistan and the rationale for choosing them will be discussed further in chapter 3.

The thesis will also focus on several areas in order to determine the effectiveness of soft power initiatives as a return on strategic investments by the UAE. This will be evaluated in terms of the UAE's primary pursued outcome based on the applications of these soft power initiatives. In other words, the thesis sets as its objectives the following:

- Determine whether the main outcome pursued by the UAE government through the soft power initiatives have been met.
- Identify the impact of applying certain soft power initiatives on the UAE's global positioning and nation brand.
- Assess whether the Global Experience Exchange Program (which is an initiative under the UAE's soft power strategy), has strengthened the relationship between the UAE and Uzbekistan and Jordan.

1.3.1 Statement of research aims

This thesis aims to analyze the extent to which the UAE's application of its soft power initiatives contributes to enhancing its bilateral relations with certain states and, in turn, increases the UAE's ranking internationally, through the different soft power indices, such as the Brand Finance's Global Soft Power Index, IFG-Monocle Soft Power Index, Soft Power 30 and the Global Nation Brands. Also, this thesis aims to assess the UAE's "return on its investment" from applying these initiatives, although they are not monetary but rather relation-based outcomes the UAE aims to achieve with several states. In doing so, the thesis will attempt to understand whether soft power initiative outcomes can be effectively measured or not. To do so, the thesis will use the case studies of two countries.

The primary research methodology is a qualitative approach. However, to a less extent certain quantitative methods (if numbers are available and can be analyzed) will be employed. As noted above, this may prove problematic because quantitative “evidence” when it comes to the application of soft power strategies and its connection to the strengthening/enhancing of bilateral relations. The thesis will also focus on the in-depth definition and analysis of the UAE’s targeted outcomes via the UAE Soft Power Strategy. In other words, what are the UAE soft power initiative’s key performance indicators (KPIs) and have they been met? In addition, a thorough literature review will be conducted in order to examine theories, applications and measures of soft power in international relations. In doing so, the thesis will contextualize its findings vis-à-vis the UAE’s Soft Power Initiative, its connections to improving bilateral relations and contrast these with the impact of other soft power deployments by various states such as (South Korea, Japan, and France, which are all highly ranked within the Soft Power 30 Global Ranking). Furthermore, primary data collection in the form of interviews with government officials within the UAE and external states will be conducted, in order to gain data, perceive their views and offer a better understanding of the topic.

Finally, this study aims to evaluate the soft power initiatives applied by the UAE government and its main outcomes in order to assess the extent to which they can be measured effectively. In other words, has the initiative contributed to the UAE’s main goal: the enhancement/strengthening of the UAE’s bilateral relations with target states and, connectedly, the rise in the UAE’s “global brand” recognition, its reputation and status regionally and globally? The answer may prove to be “yes,” in general, but more specific data and evidence may be lacking. As such, the research questions asked in this thesis are all the more important to answer.

1.3.2 Research question including type of question

Research Question:

- RQ1: To what extent does the UAE’s application of soft power initiatives contribute to and generate improved bilateral relations with targeted states?
- RQ2: To what extent can outcomes be measured in terms of the UAE’s application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan?

Question Type:

- Explanatory Question

1.3.3 Research hypotheses

- H1: The UAE’s application of soft power initiatives directly contributes to and generates improved bilateral relations with targeted states.
- H2: The outcomes of the UAE’s application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan can only be imperfectly measured because of X, Y and Z.

1.3.4 Variables, concepts and indicators

This thesis, while exploratory, will necessarily focus more on the descriptive aspect of the question. This is because the scope and scale of the UAE's Soft Power Initiative has yet to be defined, explored and analyzed in depth. As such, establishing empirical causality between variables may prove challenging. However, for the purposes of this thesis, the researcher provides the following variables:

Dependent variable:

The extent to which the UAE's bilateral relations have improved with Uzbekistan, Jordan, or Egypt, and to a lesser degree Saudi Arabia and the African Union. In terms of this thesis, the main case studies which will be focused on are Uzbekistan and Jordan.

Independent variable:

The implementation of the UAE's soft power strategy on the target state.

Concepts and indicators:

The main concept in this thesis is the soft power strategies defined and used by the UAE to foster stronger bilateral relations with various target states. The indicators of stronger or enhanced bilateral relations with targeted states could be:

- Increase in trade volumes between the UAE and the target state
- Increase in FDI flows from the UAE and/or the target state
- Voting with and/or supporting the UAE in international forums, events and meetings such as the United Nations or in support of the UAE winning a competition such as the right to host an international exposition.

These indicators will be measured through a combination of ways:

- Evaluation of the UAE's soft power strategy and its pursued outcomes, and whether the outcomes have been met during the past four years.

- Analysis of voting records at the UN in relation to UAE tabled initiatives; analysis of voting and outcomes related to the UAE's winning the rights to host high profile/high visibility international events such as Expo 2020 that enhance a state's international reputation
- The UAE's Soft Power Index ranking, this will mainly indicate the success of the UAE's nation brand and soft power initiatives implemented, as the index takes into consideration those aspects.
- Increased bilateral relations with Uzbekistan, and Jordan, through MOUs, and agreements between the different States. This indicator will focus only on the aspect of the Global Experience Exchange Program, and what has come out of it; such as councils being set up between the two states, agreements during official state visits under the umbrella of the program, and finally increased collaboration.
- The increased demand on the Global Experience Exchange Program, this will indicate whether other states perceive this program to be a success and would like to be a part of it.
- Increased economic trade flows/FDI with targeted states by the UAE's Soft Power Initiative
- International perception of the UAE, which will highlight international global nation brand polls and global rankings.

1.3.5 Research stages

The research stages for this thesis have been developed in consolidation of the Political Research Methods textbook by Halperin and Heath (2017, p. 147-164),

- Formulate the research question and validate it as a new topic which hasn't been explored.

- Develop a hypothesis for the study and highlight the main objectives of the study.
- Develop a methodology and select the main methods that will address the main question, objectives, and hypothesis.
 - Within this stage the interview guide is to be developed and shared for feedback
 - Finalizing the methodology and then obtaining a signed ethics form in order to be able to conduct the interviews.
- Reviewing existing literature associated with the main research question, in order to gain an insight on the topic from the perspective of previous researchers.
- Analysing case studies (Which include different countries and their application of soft power initiatives in different parts of the world, to enhance their bilateral relations).
- Conducting interviews with the relevant stakeholders from the UAE and respective external government officials.
- Connecting the key findings with the research objectives and hypothesis.
- Developing an initial draft of the thesis paper to be submitted to the supervisor as a first draft copy.
- Finalize the thesis paper and inform the supervisor in order to set a date to defend the thesis.

1.4 Overview of the research methodology and methods

Methodology

The main methodology used in this research to obtain data would be a qualitative approach, which is an approach that focuses on more in-depth information and will heavily focus on analysis of concepts, data, and interviews, in order to develop a well-structured theory in regards to the topic (Halperin and Heath, 2017). Herton (2017), used a qualitative approach in order to present different theories on the Gulf Monarchies' soft power strategies and how they were able to gain international recognition. In addition, Saberi, Paris and Marochi (2018) in

their study on Soft Power in the UAE used a similarly qualitative approach as they illustrated different cases which have been used by other states and how the UAE has successfully implemented them. In addition, both articles relied on qualitative methods to gather data that assisted in their development of their findings and hypotheses. Therefore, using a qualitative methodology for this study will allow a thorough analysis of existing theories regarding the application of soft power and how it enhances bilateral relations.

Because the thesis' research questions are descriptive and explanatory, various methods will be used to answer them. According to Halperin and Heath (2017, p. 97), explanatory questions are concerned with the relations between two variables. In this study the main aim is to focus on the increased bilateral relations between the UAE and other states, which was an outcome of the UAE Soft Power Strategy.

Al Zaabi and Awalmeh (2019) used a descriptive approach to examine the determinants of soft power within the UAE and how it has influenced government operations within the country. In addition, Ardemagni (2019) explained the UAEs plan to develop itself as a soft superpower and the main areas it focused on to do so. In addition, she examined the implications this new strategy has. Both articles used a descriptive/explanatory approach in order to elaborate on the topics presented.

Methods

The study will employ the following qualitative methods to gather and analyze data related to the UAE's soft power initiatives, their targets and their measurements. This will be done in order to evaluate their effectiveness in contributing to and generating improved bilateral relations with targeted states as well as understanding the extent to which outcomes may be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with specific countries.

1. Interviews with the UAE's Global Experience Exchange Program department – this program has been applied in several countries up to date and there are monthly reports on the outcomes achieved and how this has benefited the country.
2. Interviews with the UAE's Soft Power Council – there are several leaders who will have important information which will benefit this study. In addition, interviewing the front-liners would also add to this study as they will have the information as to how the strategy was implemented in respect to their ministries and functions.

3. Comparative case studies – it would be essential to examine past case studies on different states who have tried to use soft power and how it has benefited them or failed them, and what were the major outcomes for their strategies. Cases will include, South Korea, Turkey’s soft power influence in Africa, and Japan’s soft power strategy to gain votes on the United Nations permanent council.
4. Examine outcomes of the UAE’s soft power approach in two different states, such as Uzbekistan, Jordan, Egypt, Costa Rica or the African Union. This thesis will mainly focus on the cases of Uzbekistan and Jordan.
5. Interviews with government counterparts – there are several governments who have collaborated with the UAE in particular through the Global Experience Exchange program, therefore it would be essential to gain their input through an interview, especially officials from Uzbekistan and Jordan.
6. Policy Process Model – will be used to analyze the successes of the Global Experience Exchange Program, which will evaluate the process used to place the different strategies for Jordan and Uzbekistan, and examine the process of each stage and how efficient was the implementation of the initiatives.

1.5 Limitations of your expected findings

Validity refers to the degree to which one can draw definite conclusions from the research results, and whether these results can be applied to other similar cases (Halperin & Heath, 2017). To elaborate, validity examines whether the research is likely to achieve the outcomes it set out to achieve. In this research, given that the resources used are from interviews, the literature related to soft power and numbers related to KPIs and measurements, it is most likely that the research will be valid and successful in achieving its research aim. While reliability focuses on the consistency of the findings, however in this research the main findings will be relevant as long as the UAE Soft Power Strategy is in place and has not been updated or re-directed towards a new strategy. Furthermore, the findings may not be relevant after a long period of time, as usually the government revamp strategies every 3-5 years. Finally, generalizability refers to the whether the research would be applicable to another setting. In terms of this research, the content is directly

related to the UAE and their soft power strategy. However, other states and researchers might find it useful in terms of lessons learnt from the UAE practice and how to replicate their success and learn from their application of initiatives.

- Another limitation to this paper would be the lack of UAE based sources regarding the topic. Most of what has been written covers the media and tourism industry of the UAE as a soft power initiative. However, the soft power initiatives this paper tackles are related to the UAE Soft Power Strategy and the Global Experience Exchange Program.
- Getting authentic and full answers from interviewees might be a challenge, as most would give a general answer. However, this is to be tackled by the researcher in order to ensure the quality of answers that would be of value to this paper.
- Accuracy of estimation of the return on investments may be a challenge to get from qualitative research, as the return on soft power initiatives is not measured as a monetary figure. Indeed, the secondary research question of this thesis actually aims to answer to the extent to which outcomes can be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan. This answer may be negative, thus proving that attempts to measure soft power in terms of improved state-to-state relations is a fraught concept.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

- Context to the topic
- Description of the problem
- Problem statement and its significance
- Research objectives
- Research question and type of question
- Research Hypothesis
- Variables, concepts, and indicators
- Thesis project stages
- Summary of Research Methods and Design
- Limitations of expected findings

1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

- Peer reviewed articles, books, and journals regarding soft power, and the application of soft power and the outcomes of it.
- Case studies of specific countries who have applied soft power in order to enhance their bilateral relations. Some of which will include, Japan, Turkey, and Qatar.

1.6.3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Research Methods

- The methodology that will be applied to this study is descriptive/explanatory.
- The main methods used in this paper would be a qualitative approach, that will focus on interviews, case studies, and journal articles in order to answer the research question.

1.6.4 Chapter 4: Results

- The expected result of this thesis is to prove that UAE's application of soft power initiatives has increased the country's bilateral relations with different states.
- Evidence from conducted interviews would be used to support the main findings.

1.6.5 Chapter 5: Discussion

- This section will mainly focus on connecting the dots between the interview results and the literature review findings and case studies related to the application of Soft Power initiatives to increase/enhance bilateral relations.

1.6.6 Chapter 6: Conclusion

- In this section, the main findings of the research will be summarized and will illustrate the connection between Soft Power and enhanced bilateral relations. Also, it will present the main successful initiatives from the UAE Soft Power strategy that have contributed heavily in achieving the pursued outcome by the Government, and has had a return on investment.

1.6.7 Chapter 7: References

- All references used in this paper would be included in this section in APA referencing style.

1.6.8 Chapter 8: Appendices

- List of definitions and key terms used
- Ethics Form
- Extra charts or documents which support the research

Chapter 2 Literature Review:

The purpose of this literature review is to extract previous findings of academic researchers and scholars in regard to the topic of the effect of soft power initiatives on bilateral relations. In particular, researching scholarly articles about different states and their usage of soft power initiatives to increase their bilateral relations, and whether it has been proven to achieve the desired outcomes.

This thesis aims to tackle the soft power concept within the UAE context, and whether the UAE Government's implication of Soft Power Initiatives have yielded the pursued return on investment. This is a relatively new concept in the region, and there are limited studies that focus on the international angle of the UAE's strategy, rather than the Soft Power strategy as a whole. For example, the study conducted by Hertog (2017: 4-7) refers to the GCC monarchies and their strategies to gain international recognition, which include applying western norms and costly international projects. In addition, the main indicators in the paper are state-building, GCC free zones, state-owned enterprises, and new soft power strategies which consist of renewable energy, universities, and museums as part of the soft power strategy used by GCC states. In addition, Saberi et. al (2013: 44-58) focus mainly on UAE's soft power strategy through the media and tourism industry. Both papers do not address the UAE's soft power strategy and its initiatives, thus creating a research gap which requires further investigation.

The primary research question in this thesis is "To what extent does the UAE's application of soft power initiatives contribute to and generate improved bilateral relations with targeted states?". The secondary research question is: "To what extent can outcomes be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan?" Based on the research for this literature review, neither of these questions have been answered before by scholars studying the UAE and its development and application of soft power. The absence of related literature is an indication of a research gap, and therefore further underscores the importance of this thesis.

While soft power may be a relatively new concept informing a set of policies in the UAE and the Gulf region, soft power as a concept in international relations is a few decades old and has been researched by many academics ever since it was introduced by Joseph Nye in the late 1980s (Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 2004). Nye (2008) identifies soft power as the ability to change and shape the preferences of others. He illustrated that the United States have done it through their Hollywood campaigns of inspiring the dreams of others. He also elaborated that soft power relies on three main resources: a state's culture—which he defines it as areas that will attract others to visit as well as the literature and art within a society and, in addition, education.

Furthermore, he identified political values as another component of soft power, and finally a state's foreign policy (Nye, 2008, p. 97).

In order to further the research for this thesis, it is critical to understand how soft power initiatives benefit different states and why do states develop soft power strategies. One of the states that have succeeded in creating a strong brand for itself is South Korea (the Republic of Korea, ROK). The state was able to achieve a strong nation brand through its soft power strategy by combining culture and music which they identify as *Hallyu*—the Korean Wave (Walsh, 2014, p. 14). This strategy incorporates different strategies which include media, cosmetics, and fashion, in order to spread the Korean culture to the world. In addition, the government has worked heavily in promoting Korean culture on a global scale through KPOP (Korean Pop Music) and Korean TV Shows, which have benefited from strong state support and, in turn, South Korea as a state has also see its international standing rise and has attracted more and more tourists each year (Kim, 2016). This is a clear strategy that combines media, arts, and culture in order to increase a state's global brand recognition.

A different strategy was used by Japan. Many scholars identified Japan as a soft power superpower during the 2000s, due to its ability to attract others through its cultural resources and that is where all the efforts of policymakers were put in place (Bukh, 2014, p. 462). A unique strategy that was used by Japanese government officials, was the establishment of a soft power office within its ministry of foreign affairs (Bukh, 2014, p. 463). The main approach used by Japan was to focus on their national identity and culture, where they utilized their unique identity in positioning themselves globally. Both strategies by South Korea and Japan focus on identity and culture, however according to Nye, culture is only one component of soft power as a foreign policy tool (Nye, 2008).

Turkey is also one of the countries which has shifted at some point its foreign policy to focus on the use of soft power rather than hard power to pursue its foreign policy agenda. The state focuses on utilizing their culture, traditions, and geography, in order to incorporate it within their strategy to influence different states in particular Middle East, the Balkans, and the Caucasus (Kalin, *Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey*, pp. 2-3). Similar to South Korea, the strategy used in Turkey focused on spreading Turkish Drama across the world as a soft power instrument and was successful. In more violent places such as Somalia, Turkey has been able to leverage its soft power as a humanitarian actor to great effect. While aid should importantly be categorized as hard power because it can be given and taken away, Turkey's caring "face" in a place like Somalia, its efforts that go beyond actual food and medicine, mean that Turkey is viewed as a highly positive actor in Somalia when compared to other state actors such as the US, EU states and other African states (Oguzlu, 2007; Oguzlu and Dal, 2013; Cannon, 2016, p. 104-105). This has led to something termed "Turkish exceptionalism." In the case of Somalia, Turkish exceptionalism, "adds to a rational choice of

engaging in Somalia, because the payoffs over the long run are very lucrative: it enhances Turkish soft power while building its regional status as an emerging world power” (Gullo, 2012, p. 6).

Furthermore, several academic researchers have delved into the context of the UAE’s soft power tactics by using media. Throughout the past few years, the UAE has focused heavily in hosting several international media events, which include the Arab Media Forum, Abu Dhabi Media Summit, and International Conference on Film Studies. All of which aim to get the UAE in the forefront of the main countries that are known for supporting emerging talent and appreciate the arts. However, the UAE is also using media to portray its national identity and culture, with an aim to share it with the world through the different media outlets (Subeh, 2017, p. 45). Different media outlets and agencies were established to support this strategic direction, some of which include the National Media Council, which is mandated to regulate all the media channels and outlets within the country, and also strengthen the UAE’s presence through media. In addition, to the yearly themes which set the main agenda for the country, for instance 2015 was the Year of Innovation and many initiatives came about around the context of innovation. This strategy allows the UAE to gather all residents and citizens efforts to work towards an agenda set by the government, which also creates a strong story to share with the world (Subeh, 2017, pp. 46-47). However, one aspect which is not explained in detail are the different initiatives used to implement the soft power strategy and to increase bilateral relations, as this literature mainly focuses on the use of media in terms of strengthening the global identity through a communication strategy.

In terms of the UAE and its soft power, and similar to Nye’s concept, Dr. Anwar Gargash, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, identified the UAE’s soft power strategy as a cultural diplomacy to share the state’s message with the world (Aldroubi, 2018). Gargash also identified culture-related areas which the UAE has invested in, such as arts, culture, and tourism in order to be a regional leader in this area. Given the importance placed by the UAE on its soft power and global ranking, it is surprising that currently published articles have not studied is the UAE Government’s actual soft power strategy as operationalized and, as a results, its return on investment, thus creating an area for further research.

Accordingly, the UAE has announced its Nation Brand in the beginning of 2020, with a creation of a logo that will be used to represent the country to the world, through highlighting its authenticity and standards. In addition, on the official portal of the UAE Nation Brand, it is stated that the UAE aims to be a meeting point for different cultures, a land of opportunities, a global trade center, and beacon of hope in the region through creating positive change (UAE Government, 2020). All of which are broad areas that contribute to the global positioning of the country, and have several initiatives put in place in order to achieve the ultimate vision of the State, which is to become a global soft power. It would be an area to explore to understand the different strategies that have been put in

place in order to contribute to increasing the bilateral relations with different states and increasing the UAE's global brand positioning.

Overall, soft power is now being used by different states as part of their foreign policy agenda, and different strategies by each State have been put in place. While some conduct it through spreading their culture through music and media, others conduct it through humanitarian aid, and some through trade or building expertise of other nations. Within this thesis, the main focus would be on the UAE's strategy in becoming a global soft power and how it is achieving it through the different initiatives put in place. Furthermore, the different literature review gathered will help create an understanding of how Soft Power operates within foreign policy, and the different means used to achieve it. Finally, the most important part of this thesis is to identify whether Soft Power Initiatives conducted by the UAE has had a positive outcome and yielded the return on investment aimed for by officials.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology & Methods

3.1 Methodology:

This thesis seeks to determine the effects of the UAE's soft power initiatives and increased bilateral relations with different states. In order to obtain such information, a qualitative approach is used. This is an methodology that focuses on more in-depth information and will heavily focus on analysis of concepts, data, case studies, and interviews, in order to develop a well-structured theory in regards to the topic (Halperin and Heath, 2017).

The concept of Small N studies will be applied to this thesis. This is a comparative approach to examine a small number of cases for comparison reasons (Collier, 1993). A few case studies will be considered in order to come to an understanding about states applying soft power strategies as a foreign policy tool. These cases will include South Korea's soft power strategy, Turkey's strategy in Africa; and to a small extent Japan's cultural diplomacy through the lens of soft power, and Qatar's soft power strategies as it is similar to the UAE context. These cases will support the main findings of this thesis, in terms of the rate of success each state has achieved through applying soft power initiatives in order to achieve desired outcomes, such as increasing bilateral relations and global positioning.

Another aspect that would be conducted in order to answer the research question, would be interviews with UAE government officials who are involved in the Soft Power Strategy, government counterparts from different states in particular Uzbekistan and Jordan, and the project managers of the Global Experience Exchange Program at the Prime Minister's Office. These interviews would allow me to gain in depth answers regarding the context of the UAE's Soft Power Strategy and the initiatives aligned with it. In addition, they will shed the light on whether the initiatives have yielded a return on investment and achieved the higher officials desired outcome. Furthermore, it is essential to understand how the recently established Public Diplomacy Office within the UAE Government, has a role in the global positioning of the nation, and how these correlate to the Soft Power Strategy. All of which, will support the research question and will help in gaining essential findings that would support the hypothesis.

Overall, both the interviews and Small N studies will give this thesis uniqueness and enhance the quality of findings. Due to the topic being a new area especially due to its narrow scope to the UAE context, it would be essential to get information from both secondary sources and primary sources through the interviews.

3.2 Methods

The study will focus on the following qualitative methods to gather and analyze data, the main methodology used in this research to obtain data would be a qualitative approach, which is an approach that focuses on more in-depth information and will heavily focus on analysis of concepts, data, and interviews, in order to develop a well-structured theory in regards to the topic (Halperin and Heath, 2017).

1. Interviews with the UAE's Global Experience Exchange Program department – Prime Minister's Office. The main goal of this program is to replicate the UAE's best government practices, across different nations that would like to learn from the UAE experience and enhance their processes. Up to date, the exchange program connected with Uzbekistan, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, African Union, and Costa Rica. This program has been applied in several countries up to date and there are monthly reports on the outcomes achieved and how this has benefited the country. This would be an essential aspect for the thesis, as this is closely evaluated by officials in terms of the success and KPIs are set to measure the outcome.
2. Interviews with the UAE's Soft Power Council – there are several leaders who will have important information which will benefit this study. In addition, interviewing the front-liners would also add to this study as they will have the information on how the strategy was implemented in respect to their ministries and functions. Furthermore, it would be essential to understand the approach they take in order to apply Soft Power Initiatives to achieve the main goal which is to increase the UAE's global brand positioning and increasing bilateral relations.
3. Comparative case studies – it would be essential to examine past case studies on different states who have tried to use soft power and how it has benefited them or failed them, and what were the major outcomes for their strategies. Cases will include, South Korea, Turkey's soft power influence in Africa, and Japan's soft power strategy to gain votes on the United Nations permanent council.
4. Examine outcomes of the UAE's soft power approach in two different states, such as Uzbekistan, Jordan, Egypt, Costa Rica or the African Union. This thesis will mainly focus on the cases of Uzbekistan and Jordan.

5. Interviews with government counterparts – there are several governments who have collaborated with the UAE in particular through the Global Experience Exchange program, therefore it would be essential to gain their input through an interview, especially officials from Uzbekistan and Jordan.

6. Policy Process Model – will be used to analyze the successes of the Global Experience Exchange Program, which will evaluate the process used to place the different strategies for Jordan and Uzbekistan, and examine the process of each stage and how efficient was the implementation of the initiatives.

Interview Guide:

UAE's Soft Power Council
1. What is the primary purpose of the UAE's Soft Power Initiative?
2. How has the Soft Power Initiative evolved over the past 4 years?
3. Who or what government entities have a part in the Soft Power Initiative, and do they contribute to its changing nature, mission, and operationalization?
4. How are strategies developed within the Public Diplomacy Office and in collaboration with the Soft Power Council? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda Setting: How problems are perceived and defined to get into the political agenda - Policy Formulation: How are policy goals and strategies designed and drafted - Policy Legitimation: How do you attain approvals and support to go ahead with the strategy - Policy Implementation: How is the strategy initiated and components are implemented - Policy Evaluation: Is there a measure used to assess the policy success or failure - Policy Change: How are policies/strategies modified based on new information or changes in agendas
5. Has the strategy been successful in enhancing bilateral relations between the UAE and target states? If so, how do we know this and how can this enhancement be measured?
6. There are several strategies that the UAE's soft power council uses, which strategy or instrument would you label as the most effective and why?
7. Are there certain countries that the UAE aims to target through its soft power strategy? If so, how does the UAE choose to approach one state over another? Are there criteria for making such a decision?

8. Are their KPIs put in place to measure the success of the Soft Power Initiatives? How are these measured and evaluated?
9. In your perspective how can the strategy be enhanced?

UAE Global Experience Exchange Program
1. Why was the Global Experience Exchange Program established and mandated as one of the main tasks of the Prime Minister's Office?
2. What outcomes has the government obtained directly through this program?
3. How are strategies developed within the Global Experience Exchange Program and in collaboration with the states you are working with? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda Setting: How problems are perceived and defined to get into the political agenda - Policy Formulation: How are policy goals and strategies designed and drafted - Policy Legitimation: How do you attain approvals and support to go ahead with the strategy - Policy Implementation: How is the strategy initiated and components are implemented - Policy Evaluation: Is there a measure used to assess the policy success or failure - Policy Change: How are policies/strategies modified based on new information or changes in agendas
4. The program has been implemented across different states, kindly can you elaborate more on the successes and missed opportunities of (State)? (Each project manager of a certain state will be asked about the file they handled).
5. How is success measured?
6. How has the exchange program contributed in strengthening the relationship with different states? (Each project manager of a certain state will be interviewed)
7. Do you believe the program has increased the UAE's bilateral relations and enhanced its global positioning? How?

Counterparts - Global Experience Exchange Program
1. What encouraged (state) government to collaborate with the UAE within this program?
2. What outcomes has the government obtained directly through this program?
3. How was the strategy developed for (State) in collaboration with the GEEP? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda Setting: How problems are perceived and defined to get into the political agenda

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy Formulation: How are policy goals and strategies designed and drafted - Policy Legitimation: How do you attain approvals and support to go ahead with the strategy - Policy Implementation: How is the strategy initiated and components are implemented - Policy Evaluation: Is there a measure used to assess the policy success or failure - Policy Change: How are policies/strategies modified based on new information or changes in agendas
4. Has this program contributed to enhancing (state) relations with the UAE?
5. Has trade and FDI increased after the implementation of Soft Power Initiatives?
6. How do you view the UAE and has the main attitude towards the UAE changes over the past 5 years?

3.3 Policy Process Model

The policy process model will be used in this study in order to give context to the interviews and to be able to evaluate responses efficiently.

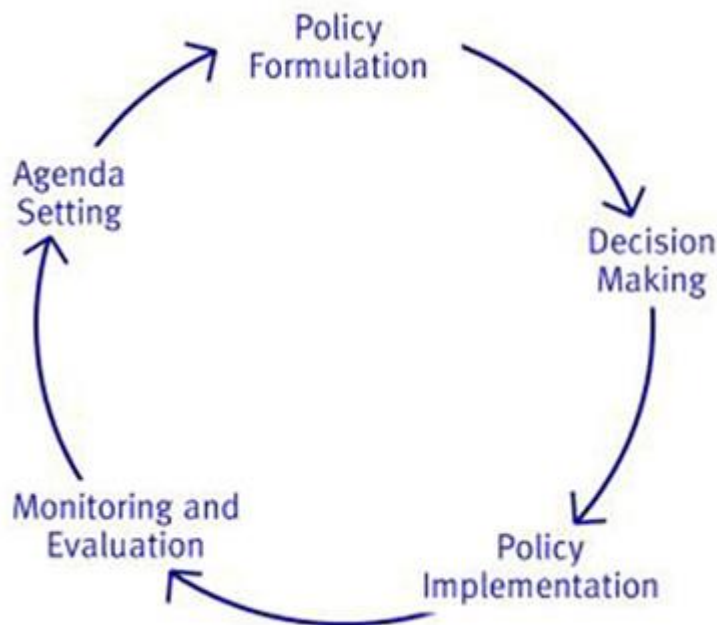


Figure 1 – Source: LSE Blogs

The model shown in Figure 1 will be used in each interview to understand the policy process in terms of the UAE Soft Power Council and the Government Experience Exchange Program.

3.4 Limitations

1. **Validity:** This refers to the degree to which one can draw definite conclusions from the research results, and whether these results can be applied to other similar cases (Halperin & Heath, 2017). In addition, validity examines whether the research is likely to achieve the outcomes it sets to achieve. In this research, the resources used are from public historical accounts, literature, in addition to numbers and indices retrieved from databases, it most likely that the research will be valid and successful in achieving its research aim. The research will attempt to prove the correlation between the dependent variable (The extent to which the UAE's bilateral relations have improved with Uzbekistan and Jordan) and the independent variable which is (The implementation of the UAE's soft power strategy on the targeted state).
2. **Reliability:** Based on Halperin & Heath (2017), reliability refers to the 'repeatability' or 'consistency' of one's findings. In terms of this thesis, the findings may not be reliable over the next five years due to the constant changing nature of government strategies and in particular the Soft Power strategy and the initiatives put in place. The findings will be of benefit to government officials for as long as the current soft power strategy is valid, and the initiatives mentioned in this thesis are still existent. However, future researchers can use the current findings in this thesis to build upon the success of the soft power strategy and whether it has allowed the UAE to achieve higher ranks within global positioning, and increased its bilateral relations.
3. **Generalizability:** Examines whether the findings are applicable in other research settings other than their original research. In terms of this research the main findings are relevant to the UAE due to the nature of the research question. However, the main lessons learnt from the UAE's soft power strategy and application of initiatives can be of benefit to different states which aim to pursue a similar approach, and use Soft Power to increase bilateral relations and their global brand positioning.

3.5 Ethical Issues

I completed my final application on Human Subject Research, which I have submitted to the Research Ethical Committee of Khalifa University on 5 April 2020. I received the Research Ethical approval with Protocol # H20-018 for my study on 14 July 2020.

Chapter 4 Results

The main findings from the research is expected to match the hypotheses presented in this thesis. Which is the following, the UAE's application of soft power initiatives directly contributes to and generates improved bilateral relations with targeted states, and the extent to which outcomes can be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan. It is expected that the UAE Soft Power strategy with all the initiatives related to it, have played a role in increasing bilateral relations especially with Jordan and Uzbekistan; keeping in mind the other states as well which have been a part of the Global Experience Exchange Program. However, the extent to which outcomes can be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan will likely prove difficult. In other words, while the findings will broadly point to improved relations, and the interviews will confirm this, the ability of the researcher to measure this outcome may prove nearly impossible given the nature of soft power and the fact that it is difficult to "count" or quantify. That being said, the UAE over the past two years has invested heavily in initiatives issued by the Soft Power Council, with an aim to achieve the main targets stated, which include promoting the UAE as a gateway to the region, establishing the UAE as a cultural hub, and building a reputation for the UAE that welcomes all people from across the world. The main findings will seek to identify any returns on investment which the UAE government may receive through the application of Soft Power Initiatives. This will be a positive outcome which will indicate the most profitable initiatives in terms of achieving the officials desired results. In addition to the underlying initiatives which are not clearly stated as part of the Soft Power Strategy, but also play a major role in increasing bilateral relations and establishing the UAE brand.

4.1 Soft Power Council

4.1.1 Introduction

Initially the concept of soft power was not widely introduced, however in 2014 the Public Diplomacy Office was launched, with the aim of shedding the light on the UAE success story, anything that we achieved as a country the office had to portray it and share it with the world. At the same time the Soft Power aspect of the office is how to connect with the local community, governments, and communities abroad through new inspiring ways which include media, events, art, volunteering.

When the Public Diplomacy Office was established the main role was to take all the UAE strength areas and create a story highlighting the humanitarian, cultural, and developmental legacy of the UAE. While today the focus is also that but the role is not only mandated as the Public Diplomacy

Office's task but also several entities, therefore a council was established that spread the roles and responsibilities to different entities (UAE Government Official B, 2020).

The Soft Power Council was established in 2017 under the directions of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid AlMaktoum, to reinforce the soft power positioning of the UAE and to have multiple entities supporting this file. The main aim of the council was to define a comprehensive strategy to reinforce the country's positioning and increasing its value of respect and appreciation with governments and citizens around the world. In addition, the council is mandated to develop strong relationships with partners across the world. Through the council there are many initiatives that were set forth that range from events, media, advertising, nation brand, collaborations, and programs (UAE Government Official B, 2020). However, the council is just one instrument there are other ways to spread the soft power initiatives and increase global positioning, one of which is through collaborating with entities such as the different ministries, local governments, private sector, media outlets, and also the airline industry, it is all about how to utilize the strength of each entity to contribute to the global positioning of the UAE (UAE Government Official A, 2020). Soft Power is a way to create a strong brand for the nation and not only through the official nation brand which was recently launched a year ago, but also through a group of initiatives that make the UAE known to the world. The UAE's presence through soft power is now stronger and we have achieved higher rankings, as this year the nation was ranked the first amongst Middle Eastern countries in Soft Power.

Policy Process:

One of the main questions during the interview was scoped around the policy process in order to help understand how initiatives are put forward through the Soft Power Council. The main question was the following "How are strategies developed within the Public Diplomacy Office and in collaboration with the Soft Power Council?" Based on that question, the answer was then it broken down into the following parts that fit the policy process model.

1. **Agenda Setting:**

An analysis of the current situation is conducted in order to define where the UAE stands in terms of Soft Power, the strengths and weaknesses of the nation in terms of soft power rankings and positioning, benchmarking of the leading countries in this front, and finally the suggested areas for the UAE to focus on (UAE Government Official A, 2020).

2. **Policy Formulation:**

Based on the above practice, the council was launched and the strategy was developed in collaboration with the team at the Public Diplomacy Office.

3. **Policy Legitimation:**

The strategy was then raised as an outcome to the UAE Cabinet, it was presented by the head of the council and if there were any changes or comments we would have changed parts of the strategy, however the strategy was approved and based on the approval received it was circulated and mandated across the different entities involved (UAE Government Official A, 2020).

4. Policy Implementation:

Most of the initiatives are implemented through the Public Diplomacy Office and the government stakeholders as the strategy has different focus areas.

5. Policy Evaluation:

In terms of evaluation, the team conducts monthly update meetings with the members of the council and quarterly reports are then raised to the cabinet, in order to assess initiatives under the Soft Power Strategy. If there is some initiative that is falling behind or costing more than the exposure received, it is then revised or removed completely. The measure used is based on the feedback received from global counterparts, media outlets, and the amount of exposure received. For instance, the nation brand initiative was launched in order to provide exposure to the public. It allowed people from around the globe to vote for the UAE's national logo. A palm tree was then planted for every vote cast and this provided extra incentive to vote and gain further exposure. As such, it allowed the UAE's nation logo initiative to reach media outlets around the world and create a buzz. However, the main aim was not only to create a buzz, it was to have an impact and make the UAE number one in soft power (UAE Government Official A, 2020).

6. Policy Change:

According to UAE Government Official A, "Due to the fast pace of progress in the UAE and the world, we constantly have to develop the strategy initiatives part, as what was applied in 2018 may no longer be relevant in 2020." Therefore, the team at the Public Diplomacy Office reportedly looks constantly for new practices and new policies that will allow the UAE to enhance its soft power agenda and work towards a more agile strategy

Increasing Bilateral Relations:

The interviews also focused on how the strategy may be successful in enhancing bilateral relations between the UAE and target states. If so, how is this known and how can this enhancement be measured?

The majority of the interviewees responded that the strategy was developed in order to create strong partnerships and relationships with different nations, which is done through different platforms in order to collaborate with different nations on different scales. The strategy in itself does not target one specific state but aims to create relations with the whole world, through the different platforms cater to that. For instance, the World Government Summit initiative aims to target all states but puts the focus on international organizations including the IMF, World Bank, UN, OECD and G20 states. In addition, the summit announces a host state yearly. The selected state is then highlighted throughout the summit. On another side, the Arab Hope Makers and Reading Challenge both focus mainly on Arabic speakers from around the world and students. Expo 2020 is another such platform. According to UAE Government Official B (2020), “The Soft Power Council worked heavily with the Expo team in order to ensure we grasp this opportunity to not only host the countries during 2021 but also establish stronger relationships with countries that yet do not have close ties with us”. The main aim is to enhance the positioning and aim to achieve the highest ranking within the soft power rankings, however the main focus is not to target multiple states but focus on a larger scale generally all around the globe

In terms of measurements, there is no accurate measure, according to UAE Government Official A. Rather, it is more of a collaboration outlook, the team reviews the participation of different states in the Summit, and Expo. However, in order to be able to give an accurate feedback to leadership, the team measures success through the global indices in terms of soft power, the number of tourists, number of MoUs signed in related to cooperation, and a whole team who is in charge of evaluating the media outputs in relation to the UAE.

Furthermore, the Global Experience Exchange Program is a strong measurement for the Soft Power team in terms of the increased bilateral relations, as this platform was created where the UAE actually shares their unique model and government operations to the world. This platform although it is a stand-alone project on its own, it contributes heavily to the soft power positioning of the country and contributes in increasing the bilateral relations with different states, through it we can get an accurate number of relationships, engagements, and collaborations done with different states (UAE Government Official B, 2020).

4.2 Global Experience Exchange Program

4.2.1 Introduction

The UAE over the last decade has adopted unique and innovative approaches to deliver to its citizens better services in all fields of government, and the government's approach embodies speed, agility, and future readiness. Accordingly, due to the UAE's success there has been a huge number of requests from different international governments and organizations to replicate the UAE model (UAE Government Official C, 2020). During international events such as the world government summit, Davos, Global Future Council forums organized by the World Economic Forum, the UAE government leadership are approached and asked to share their success story with different government officials. After conducting talks and speeches about the success, they have been asked why the UAE has not considered providing their lessons learned and success stories about the UAE's improved government services to different states that are interested. This would be done, according to UAE Government Official D, in order for the governments of other states like Egypt or Jordan to be able to learn from the UAE's success story and replicate it within their own government functions.

As a result of these high-level meetings and the conversations surrounding them, the Global Experience Exchange Program was established as an official department under the Leadership & Government capabilities sector at the Prime Minister's Office in 2017. The program is seen as an additional arm that supports the Soft Power ecosystem within the UAE and contributes heavily in establishing strong connections with states through initiatives and diplomacy. Accordingly, the Government Experience Exchange Program was initiated to cater for the rising demand of exporting the UAE governance model abroad. In addition, the program focuses on the UAE's experience in the different functions of government and each country or international organization has the freedom to select what they feel is needed from their side. The program will then be adapted by the Government Experience Exchange Program based on the country's needs. During the interview, UAE Government Official C noted, "Our aim through the work that we do is to collaborate with different governments, and to work with them in upskilling their capabilities and governments role in specific areas that are of interest to their leadership. We create customized routes for each of the countries we work with, it is not set in stone, our offerings change based on their leadership's ask and our approval. One of the major outcomes that we have seen was that we established stronger connections, not only with

officials in high positions but also the front-line government employees in those respective governments.”

According to UAE Government Official C, these initiatives have resulted in better relations between the UAE and the target state. “We now have a more open discussion with those countries’ leadership where, in the past, we had to go through multiple layers of processes just to get in touch with someone in that state’s government.” The program has therefore allowed UAE officials to collaborate much easier, communicate in a direct manner and also create government friends not just allies.

Through the implementation of the program there have been many outcomes. On a general level is the strong relations built with government counterparts and citizens of those respective states involved in the program. UAE Government Official D, added that there is reportedly more open and direct communication with those governments involved. In addition, there is no longer a need for all those processes of formalities to get in touch with a ministry in another country, it is a direct email towards an official in that ministry and we get to connect easily. Another outcome of the program, according to UAE Government Official C, was enhancing the soft power of the UAE. This was done through engaging with different countries across the world and not just in a specific region. In addition, the program’s objective is to share the success story of the UAE with the world, and at the same time allow interested countries to apply the UAE model, which is now seen as an official brand and many want to get involved.

As of late 2020, the program had been reportedly implemented in Egypt, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Costa Rica, Colombia, Senegal and Greece. In order to manage the high demand and to ensure that quality remains at the highest point, the Global Experience Exchange Program team has reportedly developed a strong model on how they operate and arrange themselves. Accordingly, each country has an assigned point of contact at the Government Experience Exchange Program, at all times without causing delay.

Policy Process:

In order to understand how the program works and contributes to enhancing the UAE’s relations with Uzbekistan and Jordan it is essential to understand the policy process behind the program, and how the program operates. To give the research results more rigor, the interview questions were mainly based around the policy process model, focusing on the main aspects of the process and relating the program structure to it. The question presented was the following: “How are strategies developed within the Global Experience Exchange Program and in collaboration with the states you are working with (Based on the below stages what is done at each level)?”

Note: The first set of answers are more on a leadership level and not per specific state collaboration.

1. Agenda Setting:

First, a government has to approach the UAE Government either through the Prime Minister's Office, or Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, where they show interest in certain parts of the UAE government functions or as a whole and would like to schedule an official visit to understand more about those areas. They are then directed to the Global Experience Exchange Program where they will create a plan for their visit to the UAE. According to UAE Government Official C, then it is a matter of deciding whether it is one aspect they wish to incorporate within their government, or is it a whole government function improvement. Different countries have different needs of capacity building for their government and based on that it is discussed and areas of collaboration are set.

2. Policy Formulation:

Based on what has been agreed upon, a model is then developed by the Global Experience Exchange Program team in collaboration with the respective entities and departments within the UAE government that are involved. UAE Government Official C noted that each department involved then proposes different set of tasks and lists the main KPIs. Accordingly, that is then raised to the team to refine and ensure there are no gaps and it meets the needs of the country which is requesting to be involved in this program, following a strategy is then defined which includes all stakeholders that will be involved.

3. Policy Legitimation:

UAE Government Official C noted, that the strategy is then raised and presented to the Minister of Cabinet Affairs. "Once it is approved by His Excellency, a two-day strategy meeting is hosted in the UAE (now it is conducted virtually). However, during this meeting, the first day includes a workshop between leadership and representatives from both countries in order to discuss the strategy and enhance it based on feedback and feasibility and a timeline is set. Following that, during the second day this refined plan is presented to the highest leadership representatives from country X and officials from the UAE government, once approved by both sides an official agreement is signed with all the KPIs and main outcomes.

4. Policy Implementation:

All stakeholders from the UAE government involved in the experience exchange, have to conduct weekly meetings with their respective counterparts in the other government and there are many field visits that are conducted throughout the year in order to implement what has been agreed on, which includes training, developing an actual space or platform, sharing critical information. Usually the plan is a 3 year plan, the first year is an initiation phase where we mainly focus on building capabilities, second year is implementation where we

implement all platforms and ensure they are running while still collaborating with the counterparts to run it, final year is to ensuring that they are able to run it alone and at the highest of standards and if all outcomes have been met (UAE Government Official C, 2020). In addition, according to UAE Government Official G, a dedicated team from the Global Experience Exchange department is also responsible of ensuring that the stakeholders received the highest standards of training. This ensures that they are able to run the newly established platforms on their own.

5. Policy Evaluation:

Within the department UAE Government Official C noted that they have KPIs that are constantly evaluated and raised to the Minister of Cabinet Affairs and at the same time the government counterparts also share their updates to their prime minister, accordingly a bi-monthly meeting is then scheduled with leadership from both countries to discuss the latest progress (UAE Government Official C, 2020).

In terms of capacity development, the measure is based on counterpart's capability to become trainers to other government employees within their government, success to the UAE Government is when the counterpart officials are well equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to be able to operate on their own with no interference or help. It is a challenge and not that easy, as transforming government also means transforming mindsets and this in itself is a huge task (UAE Government Official G, 2020).

6. Policy Change:

There are some circumstances where the target country such as Egypt or Uzbekistan may feel it needs more than what was agreed upon, or feels they are not ready yet to implement everything. At this state, the project would get redrafted or postponed until further notice, according to UAE Government Official C.

Increasing Bilateral Relations:

The main purpose of the Government Experience Exchange Program is to support the Soft Power strategy and initiatives taken by the UAE government, in order to increase the nation's global positioning and share its culture and story with the world. Accordingly, the program has contributed heavily on that front and is seen as a diplomacy instrument to support the positioning of the country through Soft Power.

One of the major outcomes from the program is the strong relationships built with different governments around the world. Establishing friendly relations with different government entities around the world is not an easy task especially when you target the whole state government apparatus and not a specific government entity. However, in just under four years, the UAE government was able to establish new strong relationships that are rooted far beyond just a simple collaboration. Rather, it involves cross-collaboration, joint teams, and a lot of communication which ultimately brings both countries closer together. UAE Government Official C added, “That is what we were able to achieve through the Government Experience Exchange Program.”.

For example, the UAE had no relations with Uzbekistan prior to 2017. No official embassy existed in either state. However, following the bilateral exchange of delegations and commencing the program, tourism increased from both sides, their presence in our events increased, we almost communicate daily on a leadership level and have built a strong bond with their government and citizens as well (UAE Government Official C, 2020).

In contrast to Uzbekistan, in Jordan, which has always been a close friend to the UAE leadership and government, the program implemented with them help enhance the Arab Youth file. In this case, the UAE Minister of Youth was heavily involved in collaboration with the Crown Prince of Jordan, HH Hussein Bin Abdullah, in a series of events hosted in the UAE and Jordan. This allowed more collaboration of upcoming startups in Jordan to work closely with entities in the UAE. In addition, more Jordanian youth have shown an interest in being involved in the Arab Youth Centre led by the UAE Ministry of Youth. Overall, according to UAE Government Official C, “The relationship has always existed but we strengthened it through an official exchange program that closely works with officials and citizens of both countries.”.

Overall, the program is contributing heavily in different parts of the world ranging from Saudi Arabia to Uzbekistan to Costa Rica. “These are only some who have approached us [the UAE’s Global Exchange Program] to collaborate in just two years from launching the exchange program,” said UAE Government Official C. Other countries are also heavily interested in collaborating on different scales, therefore the UAE government model is now seen as a franchise model where different countries apply to include it within their government functions. In addition, the UAE government is expanding its capacity building programs to include new countries, regions, and organizations. In order to ensure success, the first phase of this expansion will focus on a subset of countries, government counterparts, as well as international organizations.

4.2.1 Uzbekistan

UAE Government:

One of the major collaborations of the Government Experience Exchange Program occurred between the UAE Government and Uzbekistan in 2019 during the World Government Summit. At the summit, a high-level delegation from Uzbekistan approached the UAE leadership and wanted to learn more about their government practices and new ideas that have been implemented. After discussions internally and getting approval from HE the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, the UAE and Uzbekistan signed a three-year agreement in May 2019 that aimed to modernize and develop their government work, strengthen their partnership and improve the performance of their government sectors. This occurred during a four-day introductory workshop at which the UAE counterparts were allocated to their Uzbek counterparts and an agreement was reached in front of both the UAE and Uzbekistan government leaders as to what the main programs would include as well as the expected outcomes. According to UAE Government Official E, the three-year agreement also aims to form joint technical committees to regulate its adoption and includes 25 areas. These focus on improving services and institutional performance, creating and training leaders, strengthening adequacies, adopting a working system based on innovation and excellence, transferring government expertise and knowledge, and reviewing the best government practices.

Uzbekistan Government:

The relation with the UAE was established during March 26, 2019. His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan held a productive meeting with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Two weeks later, on April 10th, the UAE delegation visited the Uzbek capital of Tashkent. The visit finished with the signing of a partnership agreement to modernize government work between the two countries on April 11th. Following that, on May 5th, the UAE welcomed high-level Uzbek delegation to translate this agreement into reality through launching many joint initiatives.

The Uzbek government was highly interested in the UAE model and wanted to conduct a government modernization activity and therefore focused on 25 workstreams, according to Uzbek Government Official B. In the context of a specific stream, the Uzbek government was most interested in learning about government innovation in the UAE. According to an Uzbek Government Official A, “We [the Uzbek government] have heard a lot about the UAE governments role in uplifting the government employees’ capabilities and how they encouraged new methods of thinking within government work.” Accordingly, the Uzbek Minister of Innovative Development had strong interest in learning about this innovation model which was implemented in the UAE. Uzbek Government Official A, noted that the Uzbek Minister clearly stated that he wants Uzbek officials to have the right mindset and be able to think in new ways to solve Uzbekistan’s many challenges and offer new services to the citizens.

Policy Process:

In order to get a sense of how specific states collaborated with the program and how the strategy was set, the thesis researcher asked a question that was then presented to the Project Manager of the Government Modernization project from the Uzbek Government. The question was: “How was the strategy developed for Uzbekistan in collaboration with the Government Experience Exchange Program?”

1. Agenda Setting:

During 2018 the government of Uzbekistan identified that we want to uplift our government operations and have a new modern strategy, and in 2019 when we met with the UAE Government officials during the World Government Summit we felt we can learn from their successes (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

2. Policy Formulation:

An official meeting took place with Uzbekistan’s President His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev to discuss this opportunity of collaboration with the UAE Government. Following his approval, we then had an official meeting with both the Uzbekistan President and HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid AlMaktoum, in order to discuss the collaboration of the two states on different fronts. Following that discussion our Prime Minister then took the government modernization project ahead with the Prime Minister’s Office in the UAE. Where both teams met and then conducted a two-day workshop with all the 25 streams to identify areas of cooperation (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

3. Policy Legitimation:

The UAE Government team prepared the plan in collaboration with the Uzbek Government teams and discussed on what is wanted and needed by the Uzbek government, then the plan was presented to the Uzbek Prime Minister and was raised to the president for his final approval (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

4. Policy Implementation:

Following the approval, the teams started to implement what was agreed upon. Fixed stream leaders for each of the 25 we have a minister or undersecretary leading the file along with a team and project manager to be in communication with the UAE teams and project managers, we then worked on organizing visits, workshops, and training in Uzbekistan over a period of three years (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

In terms of capacity building, it seems to have been successful in building the capabilities in all the 25 streams requested by the Uzbek government – ranging from innovation, performance, services, etc. The Government Experience Exchange Program specifically sent teams from the UAE to spend a week each with the similar group stream, and they had to give them training directly on premises, in addition the department also sent a representative from the project team to introduce the UAE Government operations and about the UAE to all government officials and employees in Uzbekistan and this really helped in creating a bond even though there was a language barrier for some we were able to overcome it (UAE Government Official G, 2020).

5. Policy Evaluation:

The UAE program team have provided us with the KPIs that were agreed upon at each phase and we have to evaluate whether it has been implemented and how successful, also we on our own evaluate the capabilities of our employees involved in these trainings (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

With the Uzbek government leadership being heavily involved, our reporting process is also different in this situation. Here we appointed counterparts from the UAE government with Uzbek government, for each of the streams. So, for each stream we have a leader from both sides and their main task is to report to their leadership on the updates on a weekly basis. Following this layer, we have the Undersecretaries related to each stream and they have a monthly meeting to ensure progress is being met. All teams then provide their updates on a monthly basis to our department (GEEP) and that is consolidated and sent to our Ministers, who then update the Prime Minister, and this is also done with the Uzbek officials (UAE Government Official E, 2020).

6. Policy Change:

Recently, there has been a change to the plan where the Uzbek government decided to expand this relation to include Tourism, Economy, and Industry within the scope of the program and this was directly done with an official virtual meeting with HE Mohamed Algergawi and HE Sardar Umarzakof – Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan for investment and foreign economic relations - Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

Program Outcomes:

The main success that was witnessed in this collaboration with the Uzbek government, was the huge involvement of the highest leadership within their government, starting from their President to their Prime Minister on down. “They all got involved within the work streams in order to ensure that everything was going as planned. This really motivated the front liners and we would see their enthusiasm to learn and to build their capabilities and transform their government operations,” noted UAE Government Official E.

From a UAE perspective, an extended family in Uzbekistan was created. UAE Government Official E, added that, “They see us as their brothers and sisters and you feel their warmth and hospitality whenever we visit them.” On a more professional level and work-related, a major outcome of the program occurred via the pre-launch of the government exchange. Specifically, the initial agreement to exempt UAE citizens from pre-entry visa to travel to Uzbekistan, which went into effect in March 2019 (UAE Government Official E, 2020). As a partial result, the program has noted that tourism has increased both from the UAE to Uzbekistan and vice versa. UAE government officials are reportedly now invited to many Uzbek events. “We consider them to be a friend state with whom we are quite connected with and this all has happened in the past year,” noted UAE Government Official E. “We have a positive outlook that this relationship would increase and would create new relationships with neighboring states.”

The two government counterparts worked closely for the past one year in developing the Uzbek government operations and aspects, where many training sessions were held which really changed the way our government officials think from the high level and front line. In addition, the Uzbek government developed new services for the citizens. and implemented more than 150 new initiatives within our government in just one year, thanks to the UAE government team who have supported heavily. “I believe this program in one year did a lot of change that couldn’t be done in 10 years, we are looking forward to extending this relation further” (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

In more specific example of a major outcome, the Government Innovation team from the UAE, helped the Uzbek counterparts to develop their own Innovation Diploma in collaboration with the universities in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

- They were able to build the capabilities of more than 500 government employees in the field of government innovation
- Appointed 70 chief innovation officers similar to UAE model
- Developed an Uzbek Online Training program which will be launched
- Conducted many field visits to the UAE

- We understood UAE culture

Finally, a major outcome from the Uzbek perspective is the relationships built with the UAE citizens and government (Uzbek Government Official, 2020). “In Uzbekistan we created an extended family, they see us as their brothers and sisters and you feel their warmth and hospitality whenever we visit them, on a less professional scale and work related, we see that tourism has increased whether from the UAE or from Uzbekistan, both citizens have increased their visits. In addition to that, we are invited to many of their events that occur and also, we consider them to be a friend state whom we are quite connected with and this all has happened in the past year. We have a positive outlook that this relationship would increase and would create new relationships with neighboring states” (UAE Government Official E, 2020).

Increasing Bilateral Relations:

In the scope of Uzbek- UAE relations and to understand how this program has contributed to increasing the bilateral relations between the two states, a question was presented to both state counterparts during the interview which was the following: ‘Do you believe the program has increased the UAE’s bilateral relations and enhanced its global positioning? How?’

After we started working with Uzbekistan, we were approached from their neighboring states such as Kyrgyzstan in order to explore creating a strong relationship similar to the UAE-Uzbek relation (UAE Government Official E, 2020).

The program has allowed us to become close friends with the UAE, it has also increased the tourism between the two states, where we have many Uzbek nationals going to visit the UAE and at the same time we have UAE citizens coming to Uzbekistan. This was a government to government project however it has expanded beyond that and it has also had a positive impact on the community and citizens. Also during March 2019 it was the first time we have appointed an official ambassador to the UAE, this was a good indication of our interest in becoming close friends with the UAE (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

In addition, the program also has measured other areas which include foreign direct investment, and as a result of this joint relationship the following were achieved:

- \$10 billion in deals were signed between the UAE and Uzbekistan governments upon agreement of the GEEP program to be implemented
- Establishing strong relationships with Mubadala in the sense of renewables
- Many UAE businesses are now collaborating with Uzbekistan companies and vice versa
- Increased amount of private business deals and agreements

The Uzbek government has had relations with the UAE since 1992, however by 2019 our relation escalated beyond just having normal ties, both governments worked heavily together and there is huge interest from leadership, and that all began in 2019 and immediately many things happened including this program, a year has gone by and the Uzbek government have extended the relation even further in terms of government collaboration and are focusing more this year of investments, economy, industry, and tourism. 'I believe that this program has changed our attitude from a country perspective towards the UAE, and we feel that we are closer to the UAE government and the relationship is expanding in a positive way and we look forward to it' (Uzbek Government Official B, 2020).

4.2.2 Jordan

UAE Government:

The UAE has built has a strong government model which can be offered to the world, it is seen as the UAE's experience being replicated in different governments. Therefore, a full department and task force was initiated in order to share our experience and expertise and at the same time collaborate with different governments and international organizations. The UAE government is collaborating with the Prime Minister's Office in Jordan since 2018 on a number of areas, including Government Accelerators, smart services, corporate performance, innovation and excellence, leadership as well as knowledge and expertise exchange. In addition, in an effort to build future skills, the "One Million Jordanian Coders Initiative" was launched under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, Crown Prince of Jordan, with the aim to increase coding capabilities in Jordan, as well as the M-Gov Award. The Government Experience Exchange team and UAE stakeholders have conducted more than 35000+ hours of training, 120+ workshops, and trained approximately 2500 Jordanian government officials so far (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

Jordanian Government:

The Jordanian Government has always had a close relationship with the UAE Government, however in 2018 the government signed an official MoU which was mainly about collaborating with the UAE in enhancing specific areas such as government excellence, government services, government innovation, and government accelerators, as government officials knew that the UAE has built a strong model in those areas and in the region they are considered to be the strongest, therefore instead of trying to create a model from scratch, it was more realistic to collaborate and learn from the UAE expertise since they are a close ally of Jordan and both UAE and Jordan consider themselves as allies (Jordanian Government Official , 2020).

Policy Process:

In similar context to the other interviews, a question was posed around the policy process used to set up this relationship between the UAE and the Jordanian Government. The question was as following: How are strategies developed within the Global Experience Exchange Program and in collaboration with the Jordanian Government?

1. Agenda Setting:

The department was approached by the Jordanian government in 2018, that they wanted to seek new opportunities with the UAE Government. Following that, a high-level delegation from the UAE went to Jordan to meet government counterparts. There were discussions in terms of what the UAE Government has advanced in, which includes Government Performance, Smart Services, Accelerators, Leadership Capabilities, and the Coding aspect related to AI (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

2. Policy Formulation:

Based on the above a strategy was drafted combining the requests and the materials we thought would be necessary. The strategy was then reviewed by all stakeholders and each department was contacted based on what was requested by the Jordanian government, in order for them to give training and provide input on what they can offer, following that the strategy gets drafted fully and raised to the Director General then to the Minister of Cabinet Affairs (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

3. Policy Legitimation:

The Minister of Cabinet Affairs along with the project team review the final components and get HE approval, then a high level meeting is conducted with the counterparts and they provide their feedback if any if not they approve it and an official MoU is signed (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

4. Policy Implementation:

Once the strategy and KPIs document are signed and validated, teams then exchange visits, conduct training, and start reporting on a weekly basis in order to ensure they meet the deadline that was agreed upon (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

The training for Jordan was scheduled to happen in March 2020 and suddenly we were banned from traveling due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the missed opportunity was that we never thought of how will we conduct this training online as usually it was in person. It took us almost two months until we were able to equip our counterparts with the technology and to

ensure all stakeholders would have an easy process in receiving or giving a presentation. However, being actually present makes a huge difference and creates a personal relationship (UAE Government Official G, 2020).

5. Policy Evaluation:

The different departments to lead in their specialized areas, and they provide us with a weekly progress report and we compare it to the KPIs placed, and at the same time since I am the project lead for Jordan, I am in charge in communicating with my Jordanian counterpart in order to ensure that there are no issues and everything from our side is going smoothly and he/she also does the same to ensure there are no delays. We then report to our Minister on a monthly basis and bi-monthly the leadership level meet to discuss progress (UAE Government Official F, 2020). Success is measured based on the KPIs and the ability of the counterpart to lead the projects implemented by the end, if they faced difficulties that means we didn't conduct the training well, and that is where the building capabilities team ensure that they receive the right workshop and are capable (UAE Government Official G, 2020).

6. Policy Change:

After the first month of implementation the counterpart usually has a clear idea on what is working and what is not and based on that they request for changes or new additions, we then add a new official document stating the change and the new direction (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

Program Outcomes:

In terms of the UAE perspectives, we have built a strong connection with Jordanian counterparts within government, and at the same time established a new relation closely with HRH Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah, and our Minister of Youth HE Shamma AlMazroui, this relation helped us both in reaching the Arab Jordanian Youth and collaborating with them on different governmental projects, new startup ventures, and also organizing youth events for both the Emiratis and Jordanians (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

In the context of the Jordanian government, we launched innovation units in our government entities which was inspired by the UAE model and their team helped our team in understanding what innovation in government means. In addition, we established Jordan's first government accelerators which was completely based from the UAE model. In addition, the strong relationship between HRH

the Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah with the Ministry of Youth and over their we saw them take lead in developing many initiatives not only for Jordanian youth but for the Arab youth as a whole (Jordanian Government Official , 2020).

Increasing Bilateral Relations:

In the scope of Jordan x UAE relations and to understand how this program has contributed to increasing the bilateral relations between the two states, a question was presented to both state counterparts during the interview which was the following: ‘Do you believe the program has increased the UAE’s bilateral relations and enhanced its global positioning? How?’

On a country level the relationship between Jordan and the UAE always existed, however on a government level we are now closer to the UAE government and we both include each other during international events and we tend to support each other’s files and ambitions. In addition, the most successful part for us was that HRH Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah was hands on and worked closely with the Ministry of Youth at the UAE to come up with initiatives for the Arab Youth, that will be an ongoing relationship with HRH being active at that front, this has motivated Jordanian Youth to be active members of different events that is hosted by the Arab Youth Centre at the United Arab Emirates (Jordanian Government Official , 2020).

A UAE government employee had the following to say about the matter:

I believe that with the Jordanian government the relationship already existed, and we were close to their government before implementing the Government Experience Exchange Program. However, from 2018 – till today there is a huge difference in terms of the way we communicate, it is more direct and easier no need for all the protocols. In addition, we exchange ideas and invite each other to different international events, whenever UAE is leading in a conversation at one of the international events we tend to invite Jordan as a guest speaker, and they do the same. So, if I may say, the relation got stronger and closer it is more of family rather than just friends/allies. The Jordanian model was quite different and I would say the major success is that we worked with our Youth to connect with their youth and I believe that really made a difference and allowed the connection to surpass government walls and exceed to the youth of both states. I believe that was possible due to the similar culture, language, and the ambition the crown prince had and was hands-on with our project teams. Through the program we are strengthening the UAE's position in leading Government practices by disseminating successful UAE government experiences at the regional and global levels (UAE Government Official F, 2020).

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Research Question 1

By using the interview results and literature review in this study, the first section of this chapter answers the question “To what extent does the UAE’s application of soft power initiatives contribute to and generate improved bilateral relations with targeted states?” and seeks to prove or disprove hypothesis 1 as listed in Chapter 1.

Joseph Nye (2008) identifies soft power as the ability to change and shape the preferences of others. The Soft Power Council in the UAE was established with an aim of reinforcing the UAE’s soft power positioning and increase its bilateral relations with different states and governments around the world. At the heart of the UAE Soft Power Council’s policies and actions is Nye’s idea (wittingly or unwittingly) of shaping preferences of other states, their leaders and their populations about the UAE.

Based on the interviews conducted for this thesis, it is evident that the Soft Power Strategy uses different tools and platforms to achieve that goal of increasing the UAE’s bilateral relations and improving them with targeted states. However, the strategy as a whole does not target certain states, it is broken down into different initiatives and platforms where each targets a specific region and has a different strategy and goal.

The UAE’s soft power strategy is focuses on building several initiatives targeting different states through the soft power strategy. A somewhat similar model of deploying soft power was used previously by Turkey, which focused on utilizing its culture, traditions and geography in order to influence the preferences of different states, particularly in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus (Kalin, *Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in Turkey*, 2012, pp. 2-3). In more violent places such as Somalia, Turkey has been able to leverage its soft power as a humanitarian actor to great effect. Even though aid should importantly be categorized as “hard power” because it can be given and taken away, it is often viewed as a mechanism and tool of soft power and Turkey’s “caring face” in a place like Somalia, its efforts that go beyond actual food and medicine, have meant that Turkey has been viewed as a highly positive actor in Somalia when compared to other state actors such as the US, various EU states and regional African states (Oguzlu, 2007; Oguzlu and Dal, 2013; Cannon, 2016, p. 104-105).

The goal of the UAE’s soft power initiatives is to increase and improve bilateral relations and thereby shape other state’s preferences; each initiative targets a specific set of states. As stated in an interview with one of the UAE government officials working on the soft power strategy, the strategy in itself does not target one specific state but aims to create relations with the whole world, through the different platforms where each has a main set of states it targets. For instance, the World Government

Summit initiative aims to target all states but also puts the focus on international organizations including the IMF, World Bank, UN, OECD, G20 states. In addition to these measures, the World Government Summit selects one “guest country” every year and highlights that country throughout the summit. For instance, during 2018 India was chosen to become the guest country, while in 2017 it was Japan, and during these occasions huge amounts of delegations and tourists from the guest countries come to the UAE, as they feel welcomed and appreciated.

In addition, UAE Government Official A, stated that other soft power initiatives such as the Arab Hope Makers and Reading Challenge focus mainly on Arabic speakers and students from around the world. This platform is a successful soft power tool as it brings together talented students from around the world, and showcases their talent under one umbrella which is led by the UAE. Accordingly, this attracts many citizens from around the world to tune in and cheer for their neighbor and fellow-citizen, which at the same time contributes to increasing the UAE’s global positioning amongst the people around the world and not only government entities and officials.

According to UAE Government Official B, Expo 2020 is another major soft power initiative platform. The main aim is to enhance the positioning and aim to achieve the highest ranking within the soft power rankings, however the main focus is not to target multiple states but focus on a larger scale generally all around the globe through the application of different initiatives. For Expo 2020, the soft power council and the project team worked hand-in-hand with the Expo team in order to ensure this soft power opportunity was fully grasped and used to its full potential to change preferences and attitudes about the UAE from neutral or slightly positive to fully positive. Expo 2020 will not only host hundreds of country pavilions and millions of overseas visitors during 2021, but it is also a mechanism for the UAE to establish stronger relationships with countries that yet do not have close ties with it.

Employing the UAE’s soft power initiatives is performed by many organizations and ministries. One “tool” available to the UAE leadership in order to increase bilateral relations and the UAE’s soft power positioning is the Government Experience Exchange Program. Interviews demonstrated that the implementation of many of the program’s initiatives resulted in certain outcomes in terms of increasing relations and changing preferences. First, on a general level is the strong relations built with government counterparts and citizens of those respective states involved in the program. Second, the program has had a major role in enhancing UAE’s soft power positioning due to the high scale of collaboration between those states and the UAE Government.

This thesis evaluated two case studies of states targeted by the UAE’ soft power initiatives and overseen by the Government Experience Exchange Program: (1) the UAE and Uzbekistan, and (2) the UAE and Jordan. In both cases, the targeted states collaborated with the UAE Government in an effort to modernize their government operations through the Government Experience Exchange Program.

The results of this collaboration and the changing of preferences through soft power initiatives were more pronounced and evident in Uzbekistan rather than Jordan.

In terms of Uzbekistan, it is clearly evident that the bilateral relations have improved quite heavily through the application of soft power initiatives in particular through the Government Experience Exchange Program. As stated by UAE government official C, in an interview for this study, Uzbekistan and the UAE had no prior engagements or connections, rather than just a small office representing both countries, however through Soft Power the bilateral relations have improved quite substantially and that may be due to the fact that this was a new relationship forged. In addition, Uzbek Government Official A, stated in an interview conducted, that this exchange program has opened new doors of collaboration amongst the two governments, as there has been an increase of official and unofficial visits, which has led to forging friendships and they now see the UAE as a friend rather than just another country to collaborate with. Furthermore, UAE Government Official E, who works closely with Uzbek counterparts, suggests that this program has contributed to increased FDI, tourism, and government-to-government collaboration between the two countries, and this was clearly evident from 2017 until today.

In the case of Jordan, the Jordanian Government has always had a close relationship with the UAE Government, however in 2018 the government signed an official MoU which was mainly about collaborating with the UAE in enhancing specific areas such as government excellence, government services, government innovation, and government accelerators, as government officials knew that the UAE has built a strong model in those areas and in the region they are considered to be the strongest, therefore instead of trying to create a model from scratch, it was more realistic to collaborate and learn from the UAE expertise since they are a close ally of Jordan and both UAE and Jordan consider themselves as allies (Jordanian Government Official , 2020).

As strong bilateral relations existed prior to the application of soft power initiatives by the UAE to improve government services. However, findings from the interviews show that the program played a definite role in the establishment of strong connections between Emirati and Jordanian youth. UAE Government Official F, states that the program has built a strong connection with Jordanian counterparts within government, and at the same time established a new relation closely with HRH Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah, and our Minister of Youth HE Shamma AlMazroui, this relation helped us both in reaching the Arab Jordanian Youth and collaborating with them on different governmental projects, new startup ventures, and also organizing youth events for both the Emiratis and Jordanians. This allowed more collaboration of upcoming startups in Jordan to work closely with entities in the UAE, in addition more Jordanian youth have shown interest in being involved in the Arab Youth Centre led by the Ministry of Youth in the UAE. Overall, the relationship with Jordan has always existed but was strengthened through an official program that closely works with officials and

citizens of both countries. In the context of the Jordanian government, we launched innovation units in our government entities which was inspired by the UAE model and their team helped our team in understanding what innovation in government means. In addition, we established Jordan's first government accelerators which was completely based from the UAE model. In addition, the strong relationship between HRH the Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah with the Ministry of Youth and over their we saw them take lead in developing many initiatives not only for Jordanian youth but for the Arab youth as a whole (Jordanian Government Official , 2020).

A part of the study, an analysis was also conducted in terms of the current situation to identify the UAE's current positioning in terms of Soft Power and how they used the policy process model to set plans. In terms of agenda setting, UAE Government Official C stated that the Government Experience Exchange Program focuses in more depth in terms of this front as the countries involved within the program develop an agenda and direction on what they want to achieve and what should be incorporated within this collaboration. Agenda setting is clearly used by all parties involved whether in the general soft power initiatives aspects or the Government Experience Exchange Program, as this is considered to be the initial agreement.

However, when it comes to policy evaluation, it is evident in this study that this part of the policy process is heavily used by the project team within the Government Experience Exchange Program, as they develop policies and models of engagement based on the agenda that has been set in terms of the collaboration. On the other hand, the Soft Power Council emphasized that this was used in the initial phase of setting up soft power and introducing it within government core functions, as policies had to be developed to be able to spread this terminology across and develop a set of new initiatives that would support this file as stated by UAE Government Official A. This part of the process can be improved further by incorporating soft power terminology and initiatives on a more national scale, in order to spread it amongst all sectors for them to be aligned towards one goal.

Policy formulation is also a critical part of the process and is done in an efficient manner to gain approvals from higher government leadership. The Government Experience Exchange Program focus on cross-collaboration to legitimize the plan that is presented for a certain State by including their leadership in a two-day strategy meeting to immediately approve and edit any required changes as stated during an interview with UAE Government Official C. This part is efficient and has shown its agility in doing immediate changes and kick-starting initiatives.

While policy implementation in terms of the general soft power initiatives, as stated by UAE Government Official A, the implementation is more with different entities and is not under a core project team. Thus, creating a gap in ensuring that everything is going as planned and causing a need for multiple progress reports. While the Government Experience Exchange Program have a core project team which includes a project manager from both countries and a core team working together.

The program is well structured in terms of implementing the initiatives agreed upon and a dedicated team from the Government Experience Exchange department is also responsible of ensuring that the stakeholders received the highest standards of training in order for them to be able to run the newly established platforms on their own, as stated by UAE Government Official C.

The overall as well as the more targeted findings from the case studies does indicate that the UAE's soft power initiatives have played a significant and direct role in contributing to and generating improved bilateral relations with targeted states and thereby proves the first hypothesis of this thesis. These states could be old allies like Jordan or relatively new friends like Uzbekistan; the results were largely positive and the same. The difference, as discussed below, is that improvement in bilateral relations and changes in the targeted state's preferences is more evident in states where relations are relatively new.

5.2 Research Question 2

Analysis of the findings based on the interviews conducted for this thesis aim to answer the second research question: "To what extent can outcomes be measured in terms of the UAE's application of soft power initiatives and its relations with Jordan and Uzbekistan?" thereby proving or disproving hypothesis 2 as presented in chapter 1 of this study.

The findings indicate that the outcome of soft power initiatives can only be imperfectly measured. The Soft Power council and Government Experience Exchange Program have carefully created programs and policies that contain specific key performance indicators (KPIs), but these only measure milestones of the program rather than outcomes. As such, the program is not designed for empirical measurement but rather designed to measure KPIs, and to evaluate how well have project milestones been met. In other words, measuring outcomes has not been emphasized or, at the very least, evidence of measure of effectiveness being put in place by the various ministries associated with the UAE's soft power programs was not forthcoming in the interviews conducted for this thesis. Instead, interviewees mentioned evidence of outcomes as coming from certain indicators such as an increase or decrease in FDI, tourism and/or government-to-government collaboration. It is debatable that the above outcomes measured such as FDI, Tourism, and Government Collaboration are spinoffs of the program, and not what was the direct intended outcome by government officials. Therefore, the outcomes cannot be an accurate measure of improving relations between different states, as the variables could have been generated from another occurrence, such as the UAE Prime Minister's visit to one of the states, or different high delegation visits on different topics not related to the Government Experience Exchange Program. Accordingly, the soft power tool may have played a role in accelerating the relationship but did not have a direct role that can be perfectly measured.

Despite the difficulties in measuring success and outcomes, the thesis did uncover evidence of improved relations and more positive perceptions in one of the case studies. This seems to indicate that the UAE's soft power initiatives, as instituted by the Government Experience Exchange Program, were a major factor. The UAE government official handling the Uzbekistan file, for example, clearly stated that the UAE had minimal relations with Uzbekistan prior to 2017; it was a highly formal relationship and no official embassy existed in either state. Following the bilateral exchange of delegations and commencing the program in 2017, when the UAE and Uzbekistan exchanged official delegation visits. It was evident that tourism increased from both sides, and their presence in UAE based events increased such as in the Women's Forum hosted by the UAE Government, UAE Innovation Month, and the World Government Summit, as stated by UAE Government Official E. Furthermore, Emirati and Uzbek Government Experience Exchange Program counterparts communicate almost daily on a leadership level and have built a strong bond with both the government and citizens. In addition, there is a clear measure which was analyzed to evaluate the application of soft power initiatives and increased relations with Uzbekistan, FDI has increased with a \$10 Billion contracts in deals were signed between the UAE and Uzbekistan due to the application of this program, as this was stated by both Uzbek Government Official B, and UAE Government Official E stated that the program also has measured other areas which include foreign direct investment, and as a result of this joint relationship the following were achieved \$10 billion in deals were signed between the UAE and Uzbekistan governments upon agreement of the GEEP program to be implemented. Finally, the strong relationships and collaboration that exists on different international events is a major indicator that the program was successful in achieving its main goal.

Evidentiary information regarding the improvement of bilateral relations and more positive perceptions about the UAE in Jordan is harder to come by than in Uzbekistan. This is because the relationship between the UAE and Jordan is not a new relationship; the two states have been allies and close friends for a long period of time. Therefore, the interviews conducted provided little evidence that the UAE's soft power initiatives alone were the cause of increased bilateral relations. The one area that offered a bit more evidence came from interviewees who were involved in the Government Experience Exchange Program with Jordan and discussed its positive impacts on enhancing government operations within Jordan and government-to-government exchanges between the UAE and Jordan. Unlike the case of Uzbekistan, imperfect indicators such as increased FDI or tourism lacked a baseline given Jordan's decades old relations with the UAE. As noted, the UAE ministries involved in soft power policies in the targeted states either did not divulge or have not developed measures of effectiveness in order to measure outcomes of their initiatives. Thus, the only indicator analyzed was the proximity of the two governments and that they included each other in different international events and supported the plans of each other. However, it was mentioned during the interviews from both the UAE government counterpart and the Jordanian government counterpart,

that one of the major successes they both saw from this exchange program, was the youth collaboration that was a result from the application of the program. The Jordanian Government Official stated that, the 1 Million Jordanian Coders program was an initiative that came about from the collaboration between Emirati and Jordanian youth, and this exceeded this realm only as more initiatives took place under the Arab Youth Centre which is led by HE Shama AlMazroui – Minister of Youth and involved HRH the Crown Prince of Jordan.

Measuring the application of soft power initiatives and its return on investment is a challenging measure if a relationship already exists with a certain state. This thesis indicates that the possible results of soft power initiatives can be more easily seen when it comes to the UAE collaborating with a new state such as Uzbekistan. That is, the UAE engaged with Uzbekistan in 2017 using its soft power initiatives as the tools to enhance its relations with Uzbekistan. The possible result is that FDI, tourism and other indicators have increased rapidly, thus indicating that the UAE's initiatives were successful in enhancing bilateral relations. The exact outcomes, however, cannot be measured for the reasons mentioned above. This has proved more problematic in the case of Jordan, as UAE-Jordan relations existed for many decades prior to the application of the UAE's soft power initiatives. Like the case of Uzbekistan, the numbers of tourists and FDI have increased and government-to-government relations, particularly on a personal level between certain ministries seems to have improved. But it becomes challenging to evaluate whether this was a direct result of the Government Experience Exchange Program or the result of strong relation between the two states that have existed for years or a number of other variables.

In addition, looking into the policy process model and focusing on policy evaluation, KPIs are set for all Soft Power initiatives, however due to the timeline and interview constraints the study could not delve into the different evaluation methods for each initiative under the Soft Power Council.

However, the main focus of the study was on the Government Experience Exchange Program and the team interviewed discussed how KPIs are evaluated and raised to the Minister of Cabinet Affairs to ensure progress, at the same time the government counterparts also present their findings with their prime minister, and a bi-monthly meeting is scheduled with both countries leadership counterparts to discuss progress (UAE Government Official C, 2020).

Furthermore, policy change occurs on several basis during the 3-year plan with the Government Experience Exchange Program, as stated by UAE Government Official D, change is also possible due to some circumstances when a certain country involved within the program requests a change or an addition to what has been agreed upon. While in the Soft Power realm change is constant on a general side of the Soft Power initiatives, as different strategies come in place, and the strategic direction might change based on the leadership directions.

Overall, from the interviews conducted for this study it is evident that the policy process is used at a larger scale by the Government Experience Exchange Program, while the Soft Power Council uses a more generic strategy which has elements that can be incorporated within the policy process. One aspect which is hindered is that the evaluation method is lost in terms of evaluation the return on investment for the soft power initiatives implemented, and this can be enhanced through developing more evaluation methods that will give accurate results for the Soft Power initiatives outcomes rather than just KPIs.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

This study was undertaken in order to analyze the effects of soft power initiatives on the UAE's bilateral relations with targeted states, focusing on the Soft Power initiatives used by the UAE Government, and also conducting an in-depth analysis of the Government Experience Exchange Program and how it has contributed to increasing bilateral relations with Uzbekistan and Jordan. It is evident from the study conducted that the UAE Government has focused heavily during the past three years in developing initiatives that cater to a wide audience range rather than specific countries, as each initiative targets a specific group - whether it was an Arabic speaking audience through the Arab Youth Reading Challenge, or Government leaders from around the world through the World Government Summit. However, one particular tool used to focus on specific countries was the Government Experience Exchange Program, which has been developed in order to collaborate directly with different governments around the world, in order to collaborate with specific governments.

Following the study and focusing on the aspect of increased bilateral relations due to the soft power application, from the findings and interviews conducted it is clear that the UAE is building itself as a soft power country through the approach it is taking and has increased its bilateral relations through the different initiatives and strategies under the Soft Power Council. In terms of these findings, it would be beneficial for future research to be conducted in terms of finding new measurement tools that can give an accurate measure for the return on investment from the application of Soft Power Initiatives.

It also has been proven from the study that measuring the outcome of soft power initiatives is easier when it comes to new states rather than states that have an existing relationship with the UAE for several years. This was evident in the case of Jordan and Uzbekistan, as these two states were the main focus for this study. As Uzbekistan's case was easier to measure according to UAE Government Officials interviewed, and they stated that the Government Experience Exchange Program contributed to increased FDI, tourism, and government collaboration. While in the case of Jordan, it was stated that it was a harder case to measure whether the return on investment was achieved, as tourism, FDI, and government collaboration existed prior to this program, thus it would be debatable if the program was to claim that this was a result of its commencement. Thus, for future research purposes it would be essential for researchers to look into whether it is beneficial for states to apply soft power with ally states, or whether they should only focus on new states that don't have a strong existing relationship.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it would be recommended for officials to set a Soft Power Initiative measurement tool, which will analyze the return on investment and how successful has this initiative been in terms of achieving the strategic directions of the country in terms of increasing bilateral relations and enhancing global positioning. This can be mandated that all policies under the soft power strategy of the UAE, have to have certain metrics that will allow officials to understand how successful this initiative has been, and if it is proven to have no return on investment it will be replaced with another initiative.

Another recommendation is that what if the Government Experience Exchange Program evolves to become a franchising model, where governments from around the world can request a franchised UAE government to be applied within their country. In addition to a new model to be developed for developed countries, for instance how can the UAE benefit Japan, South Korea, and other leading states as well. As the current model of the program is fitting for governments that want to uplift their government operations, so it fits only a certain crowd rather than the whole world.

Finally, an essential recommendation would be for the Government Experience Exchange to evaluate outcomes of the program through working with different entities, such as the tourism industry, economic departments, and other related entities, that will allow them to understand whether the bilateral relations and cooperation have increased and exceeded government collaboration. This will help in creating an accurate measure of whether there has been a positive development through the program application.

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