

Abstract

Since 2016, the UAE has made significant strides in institutionalising religious tolerance. However, it has faced criticism from neighbouring countries and scholars who argue that the state manipulates religious discourses to bolster political legitimacy, particularly in light of its anti-Islamist sentiment. Despite these critiques, there is a notable gap in IR academic research addressing the implications of this alleged "manipulation" for the UAE's national security, which this study aims to analyse. By adopting an ontological security framework, this research seeks to examine how religious tolerance has become a central element of the UAE's autobiographical narratives and posits that the rise of Islamist influence represents a substantial existential threat to these narratives. Therefore, the promotion and glorification of religious tolerance policy are inherently linked to efforts countering Islamism. Ultimately, the study finds that Emirati officials exhibit rigid attachments to narratives of religious tolerance, which significantly enhance the nation's global image, indicating a transition toward a self-perpetuating policy path within the practices of state ontological security-seeking.

Keywords: Tolerance, Islamism, Narratives, Ontological Security, the UAE