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Ontological Citizenship: A Realignment of Rights and Responsibilities between the Individual and the State(s) in Twenty-First-Century Migration and Transnationalism

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Migration and transnationalism in the twenty-first century are catalyzing the emergence of “poly-citizens” possessing legal-judicial relations in more than one state and capable of multiple spaces in which the interaction of rights and responsibilities may occur. This phenomenon may facilitate the process whereby a citizen may derive the benefits of one state—for example, where he or she resides—while fulfilling the obligations of being a citizen in another state, often the country of origin or ethnocultural affiliation, thus altering the conventional reciprocity of rights and responsibility within a single state and creating an asymmetrical exercise of citizenship and redefining it beyond merely its ontological or legal categories. Moreover, tangible impacts on the allocation of resources and their transfer between states by such citizens may affect perceptions of national allegiance and loyalty, as well as notions of belonging and nationality-based identity.

Examining second-generation Indians in the Persian Gulf region, this chapter analyzes the evolving morphology and ethos of the citizen within the global space as transnationalism and increased migration redefine the relationship of the citizen with the state or with multiple states. It will also explore and distinguish between single-state citizens and citizens claiming citizenship in multiple states and how the exchange of rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the state is affected in each category. Finally, this chapter will offer a functional definition of these emerging expressions of citizenship that allows for the development of new models of sociocultural engagement, inclusion, and integration, in both national and transnational contexts (i.e., ontological citizenship). While anticipation for the demise of the nation-state may be premature, there is an emerging and burgeoning discourse whose focus is on a post-Westphalian paradigm. With the crystallization of the myriad effects of the era of globalization, transnationalism and increased migration abound, and new modalities of political, economic, and cultural expression often outpace the ability to fully comprehend

their consequences. Post-national and supranational entities, whether corporations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or associations like the European Union, have precipitated the need to assess and reassess the role and relationship of the citizen with the citizen's nation and toward additional entities to which the citizen may claim membership.

Transnational or multiple citizenship is generally based on two premises: being situational to a single geographic space or agency or between a choice of two spaces; and the status of various parties/groups of different politically and legally based categories. Much of the current discourse regarding citizenship resides within the context of the political and, more specifically, the relationship of the citizen to the state. In its simplest form, this relationship involves an individual with a single political entity, the nation-state.

Citizenship, whether political or ontological, creates identity; specifically, it allows the individual to be situated within a collective identity. How this identity informs one's notion of citizenship, or membership within a broader collective, may be understood through an examination of various typologies of identity. Pries, for example, proffers no fewer than six different identities: global, macro-regional, national, micro-regional ethnic, diasporic, and transnational (2013).

Citizenship, argues Seyla Benhabib, "is becoming disaggregated." She defines the component parts of citizenship as "collective identity, privileges of political membership and social rights and benefits" but notes that these components do not always go together. For example, she adds that under some circumstances, an individual might identify himself or herself as a member of one nationality by virtue of birth and culture and enjoy the social benefits of a host country—such as unemployment compensation—but has no right to vote in elections in that country. This situation occurs frequently within the European Union, she notes, especially in the case of foreign workers, where there is the existence of "porous borders" (Benhabib 2006). However, Benhabib presumes that this citizen would have dual identities based on birth/culture and host country. But what about the citizen who has no second tie? Can he or she not have a similarly disaggregated sense of citizenship? How does exposure to the dual-identity citizen affect this idea? How is globalization consciousness an impetus to disaggregation? Kymlicka's focus is on citizenship—cosmopolitan citizenship (2001), or examining whether transnational entities or organizations are equipped to facilitate democratic citizenship in a globalizing world. His notion of multicultural citizenship is generally focused on a single country and the dynamics of contestation and negotiation within that single space (2007).

Kymlicka's focus is on multicultural citizenship; more specifically, the study involves the heterogeneity of a population within a single political entity. A country may be composed of a multitude of ethnic and racial communities, immigrant and indigenous; it is the sum total of a variety of politically and legally determined categories: citizens, resident aliens, temporary workers, asylees, and refugees. Mere residence and engagement within a common public space do not, of course, confer equal status within that space. Furthermore, notions of belonging and perceptions of being "full citizens," that is, members of the dominant ethnic community, are highly contested issues. These issues achieve greater complexity in societies where demographics are a fluid phenomenon, as is seen in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Political participation is seen by some to be a function and marker of citizenship (Baubock). Within the context of dual citizenship, there is participation in multiple sending and receiving centers. As a consequence, stakeholder citizenship arises, where transnational citizenship may be achieved through such mechanisms as external voting. Yet external voting must be seen through the lens of a cost-benefit analysis. While the ancestral country may welcome its “diaspora” being engaged in its electoral processes, the citizens of the domiciled country may view such activity with suspicion, evoking inquiries and indictments of opportunism and a lack of national investment. External voting also runs the risk of affecting, even impeding, assimilation or the ability of citizens to perceive themselves as “full citizens” of the country where they reside. The challenge, therefore, is in coming to terms with the dialectic of “self vs. other,” as such a line of demarcation is clearly more ambiguous with the “diaspora” individual and the “home” state: “Somewhat perplexing that something is as that which, at the same time, it is not.”¹ How the nation balances its own interests and efforts to “repatriate” its diaspora members is as much a function of how the individual perceives this binary as how the society within the respective country sees the individual.

Nations operate with a certain modicum of jealousy when it comes to their citizens. They are well aware that their citizens comprise their most valuable assets and resources; sharing these with other countries, irrespective of the connections these individuals may bear, is not always or easily presumed. Moreover, the strength of a country coming from its citizenry is reason enough for the state to ensure that the state maintains as much control over the citizen as possible. Foucault, for example, recognizes the metanarrative of power inherent in the state-citizen relationship. In particular, issues of governmentality and bio-power influence the state’s treatment and the categorization of individuals, especially citizens, and also affect the self-perception of these individuals, as well as the individuals’ perception of their relationship to the state and, by necessity, other states. Often, the state will impose restrictions upon its citizens under the guise of national security. This ranges from limitations on maintaining multiple citizenship to placing restrictions on the level of engagement one may have with a second country, even if it may be the country of birth or ethnic origin. Though such measures may impede, even inhibit, citizens from exercising political citizenship vis-à-vis another nation, it will not be an obstacle for those who seek to act as “citizens” in the most fundamental, *qua* apolitical, sense of the word. For them, it is not an issue of *whether* to act as citizens; more precisely, it is an issue of *where* to act like citizens and whether that can be in more than one place at the same time.

The phenomenon of bifurcated rights and responsibilities of citizenship may be best illustrated by the example of second-generation Indians in the Persian Gulf, a considerable demographic in a place like the UAE. This group, now in their twenties, are neither immigrants nor do they perceive themselves or are perceived by broader society as being fully indigenous. Moreover, they do not conform to the traditional definition of diaspora, as they are not dislocated from a central point of ethnic origin. At the same time, and despite occupying what Bhabha describes as “the third space,” these Indians do not hold conventional notions of a split identity (Bhabha 1994). Born in the UAE, many have a connection to the homeland of their parents or grandparents only through an occasional trip to the country of ethnic origin. It is logical to

infer that this attenuation with the “homeland” will increase over time and with subsequent generations. With an identity of being “transferred Indian citizens,” these Gulf Indians regard their citizenship as a function of political and legal modalities displaced and undeployed; many would hardly see themselves voting in the Indian elections or particularly concerned with domestic policy issues in the country. At the same time, however, they bear a strong affinity to a transnational or supranational identity: citizen of the worldwide Indian community, or Indian diaspora. The notion of diaspora reminds Indians that they belong to a global community that transcends race, ethnicity, culture, language, or class. Irrespective of location or even piety, the connection of being a part of the diaspora is a compelling and magnetic force of identity construction, similar to the Voltairian concept of universalism and its concomitant phenomenon of civilization. In addition, the contemporary fluidity of the Indian world, with its myriad social, economic, and political instabilities, creates a high level of visibility of challenges facing fellow religionists for Indians in the UAE, even if their lives may be relatively secure.² Furthermore, as Fraser discusses transnationalizing the public sphere (Benhabib 2006), Indians in the diaspora already see themselves living within such a global architecture, with technology and communications facilitating their connectedness as a people with a common geographic and genealogical base. In addition, these immigrant communities represent and reflect part of the “un-detachable correlate of progressive ‘diasporization’ of the planet” that contributes to glocalization (Baumann 2013).

The diaspora also typifies the new emerging architecture of globalization, the post-national realignment of borders and identities. Unfettered by political strictures, the diaspora resides as a network to which its citizens can maintain an ontological sense of citizenship; they are citizens of the diaspora by the mere fact that they are Indian.

The focus upon an ontological conception of citizenship allows for recognition of the fluidity of political engagements and notions of political citizenship; acknowledgment of migration, diaspora communities, and their multiple political affiliations; and preparation by societies for multiplicity.

The concept of the modern nation-state, per the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, is not even five hundred years old. And yet contemporary geopolitical developments reveal many trajectories that indicate a shift toward a post-Westphalian model of nationhood and, by extension, a new conception of citizenship. If the essentialization of the nation-state is being contested, challenged, and reconstituted, then the notion of citizenship will similarly and naturally be affected. With globalization and migration creating new relationships and modes of engagement between individuals and polities, there needs to be an assessment and reassessment of the citizen’s role in new, multiple locations and in a transnational or supranational space.

Countries and their citizens have to contend with the prospect of membership in more than one polity. In the case of Portugal and Cyprus, each has citizens who belong to a nation and also to a supranational entity, the European Union, and both illustrate examples of what Baubock would call vertical citizenship. At the same time, current economic pressures in these countries may affect the identity construction of their citizens, who profess a deeply rooted national identity, yet equivocation, even

hostility, about membership in the Eurozone, where financial autonomy is subsumed to the general will of the EU, and perhaps the perceived usurpation of fiscal agency by other, more powerful nations within the EU. Such hierarchal citizenship, based on economic as well as political realities, may cause disillusionment among a citizenry already perceiving disenfranchisement from critical decision-making processes.

As the nation-state is often considered a *sine qua non* and hallmark of Western modernity, certain other presumptions are made to reinforce the essential nature of this particular polity. Charles Taylor contends that Western modernity has the characteristics of a market economy, a public sphere, and a self-governing people. Of course, this is a rather privileged, Eurocentric construction of what constitutes being modern, and it is far from being uniquely a marker of the Occident. Singapore, India, Japan, and Turkey are but a few countries that will assert their inclusion in a list that Taylor would perhaps keep more limited in its membership or, to be charitable, allow for consideration but only because their “enlightenment” was the result of either Western conquest or colonization. If financial prosperity and integration in the global economic system are markers for modernity, several other countries will claim their right to inclusion in the “international premier league” of nations.

Clearly, democracy, market capitalism, and a public discursive space do not necessarily guarantee a successful and functional society or demonstrate political citizenship's perfection. After all, current economic maladies that plague many a Eurozone country must be viewed in comparison and contrast to China's prosperity, despite its severe central-planning model.

There is the growing phenomenon of individuals bearing multiple citizenship, either with two or more nations or simultaneously with a national and supranational entity, who possess political relationships with these entities and their constituents that are not always harmonious or readily compatible. Add to this the phenomenon of migrant and/or so-called diaspora communities and the consciousness and accusations of disloyalty to a particular state, spasms of nativism, and discrimination that often ensue.

Even Vertovec, who focuses on transnationalism, presumes, as do other scholars (e.g., Kymlicka and Benhabib), that citizenship is a primarily, if not exclusively, political phenomenon. In addition, it presumes tensions or focus on migrants, that is, on diaspora communities or individuals. As borders shift and globalization erases previously calcified barriers and boundaries, political limitations must yield to the new realities of permeability along economic, legal, and even sociological modes of engagement.

One ought to pay attention, therefore, to the growing visibility and importance of the so-called displaced generation within diaspora communities. How do they perceive citizenship? Is it solely a political phenomenon? If so, what will be the impact on the reconstitution of those political relationships and engagements? Are these generations less ossified, more malleable in negotiating citizenship? Are there, in fact, areas of focus that extend beyond the mere political? Is political citizenship like the paint on the wall of a room, where as it is stripped off to reflect changing political affiliations, the dimensions of the room are also being changed? The focus, then, is less exclusively upon the political or the ontic—that is, on what a citizen is—than on the ontological, that is, that the individual is a citizen.

The concept of flexible citizenship examines the role of economics as the primary factor of the selection of citizenship, rather than group identification as a function of shared political rights (Ong 1999). In the case of Gulf Indians, economics indeed is the principal impetus for migration from South Asia, but it is not a true, “flexible” citizenship; since there are no political rights beyond the work and residency permits they receive, “privileges” can be revoked at any time and, arguably, even for arbitrary reasons.

Flexible citizenship may also be examined as the assessment and reevaluation of identity and belonging that occurs because of a trauma that recalibrates national identity, with new constructions of otherness or through a rise in patriotism and/or xenophobia (Maira 2009). In the case of Gulf Indian youth, the sense of belonging for this second-generation category exists *sui generis*; that is, their identity was formed out of their alterity from birth and in the absence of either a national trauma or the experience of dislocation concomitant with migration.

Heidegger’s assessment of ontology includes the delineation of two forms of interaction: *praxis* (i.e., social interaction) and *poiesis* (i.e., cultural interaction). These forms of interaction transcend and may occur beyond a political construct. Furthermore, it also facilitates the development of a construct that includes otherwise marginalized groups, such as stateless people (Arendt) or those who assert denationalizing citizenship (Bosniak).

An ontological sense of citizenship is inherent, instinctive, and innate, as evidenced by a newborn’s interaction with its mother, a function of both *praxis* and *poiesis*. It is difficult to categorize such an interaction as occurring within a political citizenship paradigm. Such a relationship is beyond mere belonging; it recognizes both a transactional component and a transcendent element. While this construction of the social contract exists between individuals, it may also apply in the aggregate, that is, to a larger collective.³

When a citizen exists in negotiation with other citizens, it implies an exchange of social rights and duties *vis-à-vis* one another. Whether this occurs between individuals or between the individual and the state, the social contract is a bedrock principle of citizenship. With new political realities and engagements emerging, it is now possible for political citizenship to be subsumed to ontological citizenship. How does ontological citizenship operate within trans-, supra-, and post-national spaces? What is its correlation to engagement of the individual citizen? Does it assume characteristics of cosmopolitanism, or is it more a reflection of Rousseau’s moral patriotism?⁴ One must also address the notion of the locus of citizenship where traditionally, rights and responsibilities of citizenship are discharged within the same space. Trans-, supra-, and post-national realities are affecting and will affect such spatial considerations; ontological citizenship may facilitate diffusion across existing borders and allow for the establishment of new modes of engagement irrespective of limitations caused by political and legal strictures. Ontological citizenship needs assessment *vis-à-vis* individuals who reside in Bhabha’s “third space,” that is, second and subsequent generations, for whom sufficient political and legal connections to the second country do not exist. Bhabha’s third space suggests a hybridity between two cultures that have relatively equal forces of influence on the individual; the identity

and sense of citizenship for an individual who resides outside such symmetry, and for whom such residence is ephemeral, will need to consider new liminal spaces in which to operate and operationalize his or her sense of citizenship.

Political citizenship implies the exchange of rights and duties within a single space or across related spaces, for example, a nation-state or a supranational entity. Now, more citizens, especially the 1.5 and higher generations, are comfortable asserting or claiming their rights of citizenship in one locus while discharging their duties of citizenship in another, irrespective of whether they maintain a political relationship with both locales.

Some scholars have already envisaged a world where the nation-state may have a finite lifespan as it enters a “terminal crisis” (Appadurai). Based on such a conceit, the focus on diasporic public spheres is at the crux of understanding the emerging post-national political orders. If that is indeed the case, how does citizenship as an ontological category locate itself in the new paradigm? How does such a conceptualization of citizenship differ from citizenship, *qua* political citizenship? How does it inform and affect, or how is it affected by, the political conception of citizenship? The disaggregation of rights and responsibilities within a single polity should not be seen as a diminution of loyalty or allegiance or as undermining sovereignty or security through resource redistribution. In fact, ontological citizens demonstrate a level of engagement arguably higher than “real citizens,” individuals who operate their roles as citizens within a single nation.

Diaspora is a problematic term, one that suggests uprootedness, separation, and dislocation. “It allows dispersion to be thought of as a state of incompleteness or a state of completeness” (Dufoix 2008). But are Gulf Indian youth uprooted or dislocated in the conventional context? In general, the decision of parents to migrate to the Gulf was volitional and intentional, with few, if any, “push factors” from India informing their election to leave. There are three features of the Indian diaspora in the scholarly literature: the myth of return, nostalgia, and hybridity (Vora 2013). The Gulf Indian youth possess none of these, yet they still belong to a sizable local and global Indian *ethnoscape* (Appadurai).

Is the Gulf Indian diaspora an imagined community in Andersonian terms? If so, what are the parameters of its imagination? Many Gulf Indians regard a place like Dubai not as a foreign country but rather as an extended Indian city. In fact, most do not identify themselves with the UAE as a whole but rather see themselves as residents of a particular emirate—they are a Dubaite or a Sharjahite. For some, the flight time between the Gulf and their ancestral hometown may be shorter than a domestic flight within India. But temporal realities may supersede spatial ones in determining the ontology of such a community. The age of the youth is the critical factor in framing the community’s stability and identity. Foreign children born in the UAE are included in their father’s visa until the age of eighteen or until the age of studies, whichever occurs later. Girls from this category, however, are subject to some important variations; they are considered dependents until they marry or are able to secure employment with the necessary sponsorship procurement.

Non-citizens in the UAE are not entitled to the same guarantees made to Emiratis of welfare benefits, such as free education, subsidized medical care, and land and

housing allowances. As Vora contends, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Gulf are not citizens within a “social contract”; they are inhabitants with “a right to the city.” They are “impossible citizens,” who define their identity and sense of belonging not despite the legal structures and constraints but through these structures of continuous temporariness (Vora). Gulf Indian youth are not migrants in the classic sense of the meaning. Migration suggests movement; the Gulf Indian youth did not “move”; they were born in the Gulf and have ostensibly known no other home. Theirs is a migration of stasis.

Indians have lived in the UAE for well over a century. Currently, there are approximately 4.5 million Indians in the Gulf, comprising about 20 percent of the worldwide Indian diaspora. In the UAE and Saudi Arabia, they represent 70 percent of the population (Naujoks 2013). As a comparison, nearly 90 percent of the UAE population is non-Emirati.

Clearing adolescence and enjoying the acceptance and tolerance of multiculturalism that is a common part of the college experience do not affect Gulf Indians in the same manner that it would in locations where their citizenship is commensurate with their domicile. Graduation creates the usual anxiety of finding a job and/or preparing for the impending social and family expectations of marriage. Yet for Gulf Indians, such concerns are complicated with the prospect of departure. Upon completion of their degrees, visa status expires, unless they can secure local employment and its concomitant visa sponsorship. Marriage may be a device to maintain residency status to avoid being separated from immediate family, which still maintains its residency status. With an Indian passport, the Gulf Indians can at least avoid being stateless. But they face the prospect of migrating to a country with which they may have little physical contact and cultural immersion. At the same time, however, the India to which they might migrate differs greatly from the India that their parents vacated to establish life in the Gulf.

No longer just a nation of poverty in the “third world,” India has become a producer of brainpower and was a supplier of tech capital, both human and scientific. Interest in all things Indian began to grow, a newfound desire to learn the languages of the subcontinent, an appreciation of cuisine, and even the promotion of Indian culture, be it *banghra* dances or feature-length movies. Having Indian heritage evolved beyond being seen as a liability, it was now a source of pride and promise. As India entered the twenty-first century as an emerging regional and global economic power, many Gulf Indians of the second and subsequent generations “discovered” an India with an “updated operating system,” one with which they could relate more easily. While identifying themselves politically as citizens, second-generation Gulf Indians began to see India through a range of different facets. For some, India offered new and unexplored economic opportunities, with investment in the IT industry and beyond. Yet for many others, there was recognition that India had several challenges as it attempted its leap into a more prominent international position. Having an ethnocultural, religious, or genealogical connection to India, many became interested in a mode of engagement with the country on their own terms, free of the imposition of connectivity they may have felt from family in earlier times. The actual manner of engagement has developed in activity both in India and in the Gulf, depending upon the particular focus and priority of the individuals in question.

For those Gulf Indian youth being compelled to migrate to India, an issue of authenticity will invariably permeate their consciousness and the perception by which they will be viewed by Indians. But what does it mean to be “authentic”? Can a diaspora community be as authentically Indian as those who have resided their entire lives in India? Does an Indian passport alone confer authenticity? Radakrishnan contends that “if a minority group were left in peace with itself and not dominated or forced into a relationship with the dominant world or national order, would the group still find the term ‘authentic’ meaningful or necessary?” (Brazier 2003). According to Radakrishnan, the Gulf Indian youth may be seen as an authentic community. The social dynamics of the UAE allow the Indian diaspora to exist within a bubble of Indian culture and social intercourse. They do not interact in any meaningful manner with the Emirati society. Moreover, the Emiratis are dominant in a political and legal capacity but are neither demographically nor culturally dominant. There is no paucity of Indian foods, clothes, cultural events, or entertainment available for every linguistic, regional, and ethnic subgroup of the subcontinent. There is no challenge to be and/or remain as quintessentially “Indian” as one so desires.

While Indians may have access to a shared ethnocultural space in the Gulf, socioeconomic realities create some of the same subdivisions within the diaspora community as would be evident in the “home country,” especially in matters of education (Vora). There are Indian primary and secondary schools available for most families; for those with the requisite desire and financial means, British and American schools offer a more rigorous curriculum and a space in which to interact with non-Indian, even Emirati peers. As a result, this “privileged group” is limited in its interaction with conationals. The current study is limited in its scope to Gulf Indian youth hailing from middle- to upper middle-class families, whose parents occupy positions within the technocratic fields. Children of migrant laborers, particularly those from the construction and domestic sectors, are not included, primarily as a result of their absence from the Gulf due to immigration regulations.

For Appadurai, diasporic public spheres are the “crucible of a postnational political order” (Appadurai 1996). In essence, Gulf Indian youth epitomize such a conceptualization. They constitute a demographic attenuated from the country of its political citizenship but yet detached from the political anchor that one’s domicile would normally provide. According to Pries’s typologies, Gulf Indian youth comprise of all six identity markers. They bear a national (Indian) identity; they often maintain their micro-regional ethnic identity, contingent upon the region of India to which they affiliate (Kerala, Punjab, etc.); they are macro-regional (South Asian); diasporic; transnational; and, given Dubai’s cosmopolitanism, global as well. While they bear such multiplicity of identity, the Gulf Indian youth lack any connective citizenship with their domicile.

Yet the lack of political citizenship does not seem to trouble the youth, who do not see such engagement as critical to their ability to navigate life in the Gulf. There is a cultural citizenship that occurs by their presence; it is diffusive in spreading their Indian ethnic culture into the multicultural mosaic that defines UAE society. Their location as a diasporic public sphere is within what many would argue is the very apotheosis of globalization. Ironically, their Indian identity may be less susceptible to the seismic and disruptive forces of global commodification. The Gulf Indian

youth are children of every culture—Hollywood, Bollywood, US hip-hop, K-pop, Euro techno-pop—every culture but that of their physical “homeland,” which does not assert a particular, identifiable Arab/Emirati culture.⁵ By contrast, their ancestral homeland’s culture is under assault, with the Anglicization of Bollywood dialogue and commodification of yoga in Western society. It is an open question whether their engagement with *mimetic rivalry*, the pursuit of material markers of success and acceptance as defined and determined by globalization forces, is more corrosive than the impact upon their conationals in India (Mishra 2017).

Gulf Indian youth navigated an identity that is a particularly contested construction. It does not readily emerge as an example of dual consciousness (DuBois 1994), a frame predicated upon binaries such as West versus East and Euro-American versus Asian. Rather, the youth represent the epitome of multiple consciousness, but one that is an example of alterity, not an affirmative assertion of identity per se (Dabashi 2013). They defy the simplistic binaries by being not Indian, not Emirati, not South Asian. Their transnational identity, qua alterity, thus defines them as being what they are not more than what they may be in more conventional registers.

The acceptance of Gulf Indians in positions of cultural production and cultural authority is certainly a positive development for the Indian diaspora in the UAE, but how does it affect its relationship with India? One may reasonably infer that the greater the sense of acceptance in the UAE, the lower the incentive to feel a strong connection to India. After all, if cultural acceptance is regarded as the most serious obstacle to breach in order to gain a sense of belonging, and if it is in fact overcome, then the need to maintain a close affiliation with the “home” country becomes all the more attenuated. Clearly, one can belong to and/or maintain identity and connectivity with more than one space—both the UAE and India simultaneously—but the odds and impetus for doing so will doubtless be influenced by the viability and merits of keeping a balance or strong tie to one country, especially if it is neither the domicile nor the locus of sustained engagement. For many young Gulf Indians, language, cuisine, and customs are not barriers to navigating life in the UAE. There is an ample critical mass of Indian culture, with its various manifestations—cuisine, apparel, entertainment, and so on—in abundant supply. Being Indian is not a challenge in Dubai; if anything, it is encouraged as a way to promote the emirate’s insistence on displaying its cosmopolitan bona fides to the world and by creating a de facto cultural bubble in which the Indian diaspora can operate and feel a sense of belonging.⁶ In addition, Gulf Indians who face the prospect of leaving their domicile have choices. Notwithstanding their effort to remain in the UAE by securing their own residency permit, they may avail themselves, through employment opportunity or marital dynamics, to opt for North America, Europe, or Australia as possible locales for migration. While India may present itself as a default destination with their citizenship, it may not be the presumptive, automatic selection. How then can India incentivize Gulf Indians to become “neo-patriates” to their ancestral country? Apropos Anderson, all communities are by definition imagined, but there exists a certain morphology to such an imagined community based upon ethnicity, religion, and culture, as well as interaction with the country of residence. For Gulf Indian youth, the parameters of the imagined community are nebulous given the uncertainty of the destination of their next migration.

In general, there are three reasons why someone may seek a stronger connection to India while living as a member of the diaspora: economic, political, and emotional. Each of these rationales, however, brings with it a measure of unreliability in its ability to serve as an accurate predictor of one's motivation to enter into sustained engagement with India. Economic reasons, for example, may fluctuate with the same level of volatility and uncertainty as market forces themselves. Given the mercurial nature of financial ties, through either short- or long-term investment, offering enticements to a member of the Indian diaspora carries the twin risks of instability of capital infusion and sustained interaction, as well as overreliance on a financial source that may be ephemeral. In addition, there may be a fine line of perception between someone regarding India as the venue for a sound capital investment or as a charity case. An economic relationship with India absent a well-developed, well-informed understanding of the country's myriad and complex cultural, political, and financial tectonic plates has the potential to create more tensions and conflicts than what the engagement seeks to mitigate.

Political incentives are oftentimes concomitant with economic enticements. The notion of a *quid pro quo* is not only an expected framing of the interaction between an individual and the state or society, but is made all the more poignant when the individual is not a "full" citizen of the state. Moreover, the oeuvre of some form of consideration by the state for the individual's engagement may be viewed by both parties as a vehicle to solemnize and bind the "contract," obviating the doubts of commitment that may exist in a more illusory or unilateral intervention. The scope of the political benefit that the state offers the diaspora individual may range from a status that facilitates entry into the country to expedited and less cumbersome means of transactional interaction, commercially and otherwise, and perhaps even citizenship with voting rights or privileges.

The state's decision on the scope of incentives it seeks to confer upon the diaspora individual is a dilemma involving the typical choices of offering too much or too little incentive to trigger interaction. While some non-resident Indian economic or social entrepreneurs will appreciate "fast track" airport service and the ability to avoid additional layers of bureaucratic complexity usually reserved for foreigners, the prospect of having rights comparable or equal to domiciled citizens is enticing and desirable but not a *sine qua non* to working or investing in India. Some may be dissuaded from engaging with the country if they are denied the privilege of being full stakeholders, but there does not appear to be a compelling rationale why an investor, property owner, philanthropist, or social entrepreneur would require voting rights in the nation's elections. Furthermore, the debate of being a "full" citizen will assume new levels and volumes of rancor in the public and political discourse when Indians question why a diaspora individual, for example, in his or her mid-twenties and with no prior interaction with India suddenly has the same enfranchisement in the voting process as, say, a sixty-five-year-old person who has always lived in India, always paid taxes there, and has never even left the country. Likewise, issues of transparency regarding political access may arise if resulting laws and regulations are based on status, not source of funding, lobbying, and so on. Given the twin polemical specters of corruption and foreign influence, the potential for a volatile, divisive controversy

emerging is quite real. A thorough cost-benefit analysis is critical in gauging not just the economic consequences but also the sociopolitical dimensions that, oftentimes, obfuscate and dominate the issue at hand.

Guilt can serve as a highly compelling force of influence in causing an individual to engage in a situation that may be new and unfamiliar. For the diaspora individual, particularly for one with few to no ties with the home country, a latent sense of connection may manifest itself later in life and gain strength as a function of such guilt. The level of engagement, and perhaps the incentivization to “return” to the country in question, may be the result of overcompensation, insecurity, and even a feeling of coercion, either self-perceived or from family or community. All of these motivations, however, are unreliable and therefore may frame the desire for engagement to be ephemeral. The emotional impetus, borne of less-than-rational foundations, can create an impulsive, reflexive interaction but may lead to an equally rash, rapid disengagement. The decision to confer a powerful benefit upon a recipient who may possess an uncertain commitment to a sustained interaction places the state in a dubious position; the potential benefits of interacting at this level with diaspora individuals must be tempered by the risks of unpredictable relations and outcomes therein.

A state seeking to enhance connections to its diaspora through increased enfranchisement with the home country must recognize and address the diaspora individual’s economic and political motivations, along with emotional influences that may inform his or her impetus to engage as well as any expectations of results from maintaining such a relationship. While each of these factors brings different costs and risks, as well as the varying levels of complexity that accompany them, the ability to appeal to a more core, ontological sense of connection may mitigate uncertainty and amplify the strength of the interaction. A focus on the elemental notion of citizenship, an exchange of rights and responsibilities, and the latitude to have such an exchange occur outside conventional spaces of reciprocity is an important dimension to explore when fostering the ties between members of the Indian diaspora and India.

Second-generation Gulf Indians do not see themselves as fully enfranchised and vested UAE citizens, because laws and regulations preclude their ability to do so; they consider themselves to be part of a diaspora community, not completely “home” yet not sure where some other “home country” exists for them. Nonetheless, it is their notion of ontological citizenship that motivates them to engage with India and allows for the prospect of continuing a beneficial series of engagements both in India, to improve civil society, and in the UAE, where they endeavor to ameliorate the narrative about India and its citizens.

Notes

- 1 Martin Heidegger, *Plato’s Sophist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 580. The ontological perception of the self is mediated by how others situate the individual. Common ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic markers may not be sufficient to overcome a sense of otherness that may emerge through migration. Over

time, both the diaspora individual and people in the home country may see each other as distinctly different, that is, as the Other.

- 2 Voltaire, *Candide* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005).
- 3 Scholars such as Castoriadis theorize on the relationship between the imaginary and the ontological as a synthetic process. However, Habermas's criticism of Castoriadis's difficulty in demonstrating the mediation between the individual and society provides justification for his particular exclusion from further analysis or citation in the present study. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).
- 4 George Cavallar, "Educating Émile: Jean-Jacques Rousseau on Moral Cosmopolitanism," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 17, no. 4 (2012): 485–99.
- 5 The geography of Gulf Indian youth in the liminal spaces of what were once well-defined boundaries of nation-state dynamics, and their interaction with the material in a place like Dubai, reflects the cautionary tone issued by Habermas of the multinational corporation filling the void left by the breakdown of conventional nation-state modalities of distinction and concomitant modes of "citizenship," along with the degradation of traditional forms of political integration (Habermas 1998). Dabashi similarly recommends an antidote to the "systematicity of that globalized destitution" to create new forms of transnational solidarity. Gulf Indian youth could represent an example of such an alternative, but simultaneously, they may typify the very discontents against which Dabashi warns, given their exposure and engagement with Dubai's hyperconsumerism. See Hamid Dabashi, *Iran without Borders* (London: Verso Books, 2016).
- 6 There is an important caveat, however, of cosmopolitanism, specifically its default construction as "unabashedly Eurocentric and self-indulgent, confident and self-sufficient and yet paradoxically parochial and provincial in its confidence that what it imagines as 'the world,' and the manner in which it occupies that world, is 'the' world and nothing else." See Hamid Dabashi, *Persophilia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 139.

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