

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES' INTERESTS ON NET ZERO 2050 INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has embarked on UAE Net Zero 2050 initiative to integrate its vision of economic development with environmental sustainability. This strategic move marks an important shift in the UAE's approach in balancing its role as a major oil producer with its commitment to global climate action. The UAE's status as an oil producing country should consider environmental issues as a sensitive issue, because it could hamper economic growth and sales of the main commodity, namely oil. Based on this, it is interesting to see what strategy the UAE uses to carry out the initiative. These initiatives not only align with international climate goals but also serve domestic sustainability interests, encapsulating the dynamics of Coplin's theory of foreign policy making. The strategy involves negotiating these interests against the backdrop of domestic economic diversification goals and international pressure to reduce carbon emissions. This paper will analyse the UAE's strategy in implementing Net Zero 2050 uses qualitative descriptive methods to describe the strategy of the initiative policy. This research uses secondary data by taking data from literature studies, official documents, and internet. Hopefully, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of state behaviour in international climate change discourse.

Keywords: UAE; Net-Zero; Decision-making process

ABSTRAK

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) telah memulai UAE Net Zero 2050 yang sejalan dengan rencana integrasi visi pembangunan ekonomi dengan kelestarian lingkungan. Langkah

strategis ini menandakan perubahan penting dalam pendekatan UAE dalam menyeimbangkan perannya sebagai produsen minyak utama dengan komitmennya terhadap aksi iklim global. Status UAE sebagai negara produsen minyak menganggap isu lingkungan sebagai isu yang sensitif karena bisa menghambat pertumbuhan ekonomi dan penjualan komoditas utama UAE yaitu minyak. Berangkat dari hal ini, menarik untuk dilihat bagaimana strategi yang digunakan UAE sebagai salah satu negara produsen minyak mengusung UAE Net Zero 2050? Inisiatif ini tidak hanya sejalan dengan tujuan iklim internasional namun juga memenuhi kepentingan keberlanjutan dalam negeri, yang merangkul dinamika teori pembuatan kebijakan luar negeri oleh Coplin. Strategi UAE melibatkan negosiasi dengan latar belakang tujuan diversifikasi ekonomi domestik dan tekanan internasional untuk mengurangi emisi karbon. Artikel ini akan menganalisis bagaimana strategi UAE dalam mengusung Net Zero 2050. Penelitian ini akan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk mendeskripsikan strategi UAE dalam kebijakan Net Zero 2050. Penelitian ini menggunakan data sekunder dengan mengambil data dari studi literatur, dokumen resmi, dan internet. Penelitian ini diharapkan akan berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang perilaku negara dalam wacana perubahan iklim internasional.

Kata Kunci: UAE; Net-Zero; Proses Pembuatan Kebijakan

INTRODUCTION

Known for its major oil reserves, countries in the Middle East tend to utilise it for their economic resources. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the many countries in the Middle East that is known for having a vast oil reserve and exporting them as their economic resources. It consists of seven emirates, one of which is Abu Dhabi where the first shipment of crude oil was taken in 1962 since its discovery in the early 1930s (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington DC, n.d.). Since then, the UAE has evolved into a sophisticated state with a high level of life (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, n.d.). But recently, many countries in the Middle East have thought that depending on their economic resources based on oil is not sustainable because of its ups and downs prices. This indirectly forces many Middle Eastern countries to alter their economies to withstand the shock of much-reduced oil income and to prepare for the future without fossil fuels. UAE is one of the Middle Eastern countries where their leader realised the need to lessen reliance on oil income and launched a series of ambitious programs to reform their economy (Dubai.com Editors, 2023).

Looking at the current state of the earth that is going with climate change issues, there are many impacts of climate change itself. Global warming is one of the many impacts of

climate change which would cause the temperature to increase, this phenomenon could also be called a heat wave. Located in the Middle Eastern region, the UAE has a high potential to be affected by climate change (UAE Government Portal, 2020). It says that the implications of the climate change impacts could destroy many aspects such as infrastructure, human health, and natural habitat, which then would affect the making of a variety of development sectors and policies such as socioeconomic, health, and environmental. As one of the biggest fossil fuel producers, the UAE plays a crucial role in the global energy system, on one side it needs to reduce emissions mainly from fossil fuels, but on the other side it has to provide the world with fossil fuels for energy (UAE Government Portal, 2020). Knowing the damage that could be done, the UAE has a comprehensive approach to climate change, which includes controlling emissions, reducing the flaring of natural gas, increasing energy efficiency, and undertaking many other steps.

As the first country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement in 2016, the UAE announced its program to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 back in 2021, which was part of the country's vision itself. This strategic project, usually referred to as Net-Zero 2050, is a national campaign to attain net-zero emissions by 2050, which would make the UAE the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to achieve zero carbon emissions. The program is also in line with the UAE's Principles of the 50, which is a blueprint created to increase the national economic development in the country's golden jubilee year, as the country starts a new 50-year cycle of growth. The economic potential while also attaining the initiatives could pave the way for the country to become the most dynamic economy in the world (UAE Government Portal, 2023).

To ensure the effective implementation of the Net-Zero 2050 initiative, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment is collaborating with all industries and authorities at various government levels responsible for conducting studies to introduce measures to reduce emissions. In attaining its goal of Net-Zero 2050, the Ministry's responsibilities include conducting research and formulating policies, programs, and strategies. Power, agriculture,

infrastructure, and transportation are the sectors implemented to fulfil this initiative (Croker, 2022). One of its projects is to deploy and use clean energy to address the challenge of climate change and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The country's journey on financing renewable energy projects started 15 years ago, and until now it has committed to the project for more than 40 billion USD. It is estimated that clean energy production capacity, including solar and nuclear, approximately will increase until reaching the number of 14 gigawatts by 2030, increasing around 100 megawatts in 2015 and 2.4 gigawatts from 2020 (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington DC, 2022). UAE also has invested in renewable energy ventures worth around 16.8 billion USD in 70 countries focusing on developing nations as a sign for their support for green infrastructure and clean energy projects worldwide. The strategy's implementation is expected to contribute around 3% of the national GDP, as well as increased export potential. This indicates that the economic transition to a green economy can be a strong engine for economic development and opportunity, creating new sustainable employment, advancing technology at a rapid rate, and building a forward-thinking economy built on sustainable foundations (Croker, 2022).

The initiative not only aligns with international climate goals but also must cater to domestic sustainability interests. UAE in its effort to secure its position as a leader in climate-responsive policy on the international stage while fostering green technology and renewable energy sectors domestically. The UAE's strategy involves negotiating these interests against the backdrop of domestic economic diversification goals and international pressure to reduce carbon emissions. This matter raises questions as to **“how UAE navigates between the national, and international levels, exerting influence and placing their preferences on the political agenda”** contributing to a deeper understanding of state behaviour in the international climate change discourse.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Decision-making process by Coplin

Coplin explained that there are at least three indicators that need to be prioritised in formulating foreign policy. First, the role of groups, political parties, and bureaucrats as actors who influence domestic political policies. Military and economic strength is a second factor. Economic strength itself has several aspects, such as the historical development of a country's economic conditions, national production capacity, and the country's dependence on foreign trade. In this case, foreign policy is greatly influenced by the history of economic development, which can also be used to measure the production potential of export goods. The next way to measure military strength is to see how ready a country is to use force and protect its security from external threats. Domestic dynamics are mainly measured through domestic politics, economic and military strength. Foreign policy is influenced by foreign dimensions. Therefore, the scope of international relations is determined by the nature of relations between countries regarding the state of the international system and international policy, which determines the position each country will take.

Green Theory

By the 1990s, International Relations had come to recognize the natural environment as an increasingly significant source of questions for the discipline, requiring both theoretical and practical attention, especially in light of mounting evidence that human actions were significantly changing our global climate, posing both security and ecological problems. Climate change, fueled by disastrous reliance on fossil fuels, is the primary environmental challenge of these days. According to the green theory, climate change is caused by people or human choices. As an example, for the sake of the economy of some countries, the people within it will exploit their own environment or their own nature just for its short-term economic gain. Climate change is an obvious example of injustice, both to individuals who are not at fault now and in the future, and to the ecosystem as a whole. As a result, a solution necessitates an ecocentric philosophy of value and a more ethical rather than instrumental approach to human connections in our shared future.

Green theory helps comprehend in terms of long-term ecological values as opposed to short-term human interests. States often pursue these interests through technological investments, but there is no simple technical answer to human-caused climate change. According to green theory, this technical standstill necessitates a transformation in human values and behaviour, presenting a chance for political innovation or possibly a paradigm shift in world politics (Dyer, 2018). Green Theory prioritises sustainability, participatory democracy, social justice, diversity appreciation, peace, and nonviolence. It condemns modern cultures for their reliance on unsustainable economic development, overconsumption, and natural resource destruction. Sustainable development, renewable energy, conservation, and green economies are some of the solutions proposed by the Green Theory. It also suggests redefining "wealth" to emphasise quality of life above consumption. Simply put, this theory can be a bridge for the political interests of the state and stakeholders.

RESEARCH METHODS

The type of method that will be used by the authors in this research is a descriptive qualitative which will explain how UAE navigates between the national and international levels, exerting influence and placing their preferences on the political agenda. In preparing the research, the authors will use document study data collection techniques. Document studies are carried out by reviewing documents related to the research topic. The documents in question can be letters, archives, photos, meeting minutes, journals, diaries, reports, and so on.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The UAE's effort to implement the Net Zero 2050 Initiative can be looked at by their preparations to turn into smart and green cities that would ensure sustainable growth for future generations in recent years, especially in the capital Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Coal, oil, and gas which are grouped as fossil fuels are by far the most significant contributors to global climate change, responsible for more than 75% of the world's greenhouse emissions and

almost 90% of the total carbon dioxide emissions (United Nations, n.d.). When greenhouse gases are emitted to the surface of the earth it will cause a trapped heat of the sun which results in global warming and climate change. The earth is warming faster today than at any other time in recorded history. The UAE is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including increasing sea levels, which might disrupt essential infrastructure such as desalination and power plants. The impact of climate change could risk people's health by any means. For this reason, the UAE government is trying to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels by finding another way such as using sustainable or renewable energy to save the environment itself. The founding father of the UAE, Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, said that they will take care and attention to their environment as it is an important element of the country, history, and tradition (United Arab Emirates Climate Change Special Envoy, n.d.). A low-carbon future has enormous promise, whether it is for cleaner air, better health, or stronger economies via the development of millions of new jobs.

The UAE's Net Zero 2050 blends economic and environmental goals with their visions. The National Energy Strategy 2050 outlines clean energy targets, aligning with environmental policies in the National Climate Change Plan. Bureaucratic coordination, led by entities like the UAE Council on Climate Change and Environment, ensures alignment across federal and emirate-level policies. The Ministry of Climate Change and Environment spearheads crucial research and strategies. Collaborative efforts with NGOs and youth initiatives, such as the National Dialogue for Climate Ambition and Masdar Youth for Sustainability Platform, empower the younger generation in climate action.

UAE's interest and efforts to fight climate change can be seen as they were the first country in the Middle East to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement back in 2016. The Paris Agreement itself is a legally binding international climate change treaty that was adopted by 196 countries at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP) in Paris. Its ultimate objective is to keep the increase in global average temperature below 2°C above pre-industrial level" and to pursue initiatives to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels

(UNFCCC, n.d.). The Paris Agreement is a watershed moment in the international climate change process because it brings all nations together for the first time to battle climate change and adapt to its consequences. To comply with the agreement, the UAE has initiated a policy on reducing carbon emissions called the Net Zero 2050 Initiative, a comprehensive roadmap that adopts a multifaceted approach and integrates economic, environmental, and social dimensions. The strategy includes enhanced energy efficiency, increased capacity for renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, and a focus on green industries and related jobs. The goals are: 44% clean energy; 38% gas; 12% clean coal; 6% nuclear; 50.000 new green jobs by 2030; triple the renewable energy capacity to 14 gigawatts by 2030; increase the percentage of clean energy in the total energy mix to 30 percent by 2031; and become carbon-neutral by 2050 (Embassy of the United Arab Emirates Washington DC, 2022).

The government of Abu Dhabi built "Masdar" as the first nucleus to handle rising development, air pollution by relying on renewable energy, and recycle garbage using cutting-edge technology (GCC Studies Unit, 2021). In Dubai, evidenced by Dubai's Sustainable City concept, which is focused on digital transformation, the Emirate of Dubai has accelerated AI-powered initiatives aiming at transitioning into a completely smart city (GCC Studies Unit, 2021). The "Sustainable City" in Dubai is the region's and the Arab world's first residential project to create sustainable energy. This effort transforms social, economic, and environmental sustainability into practice. In addition to that, around the world, the UAE has backed several green infrastructure and sustainable energy initiatives. It also encouraged the development and use of renewable energy solutions in developing nations, spending roughly \$16.8 billion on renewable energy projects in 70 countries (GCC Studies Unit, 2021).

These implementations of the initiative not only reduce and be a country with zero carbon emissions in 2050 as the target but can also stimulate economic and societal development by accelerating the transition to net zero emissions. The initiative has 25 programs across 6 sectors such as power, industry, transport, buildings, waste, and agriculture. The objective is that the programs will concentrate on increasing efficiency, increasing the use of renewable

energy sources, adopting sustainable transportation and green construction practices, incorporating nature-based solutions, and utilising carbon capture technology (The UAE Government Portal, 2023). On the energy side, the UAE is capable of producing the world's least expensive solar energy and is home to three of the world's largest and least expensive solar power facilities. It is also the region's first country to employ nuclear energy to generate power, as well as the region's first country to develop and deploy industrial-scale carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) (GCC Studies Unit, 2021). Their technologies and production of green goods not only could accelerate its goals of attaining zero carbon emissions by 2050 but also could enhance its export opportunities. Investment in renewable energy, both domestically and internationally, demonstrates the UAE's dedication to promotes clean energy and as a brand tool for the country in another area that is becoming more and more important on a global scale and is currently at the top of the agenda for nations as well as regional and international forums; combating climate change. The UAE has become a regional leader in solar and wind power after investing billions of dollars in domestic renewable energy projects. Since 2011, it has been the host country for the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA).

Domestic level

The UAE's commitment to initiating a Net Zero plan is a proactive response to the severe climate impacts that have been affecting the country. The average temperature increases in the UAE surpass the global average, highlighting the urgency of addressing climate change. With climate projections indicating heightened temperatures, increased humidity, and rising sea levels, the UAE faces significant economic risks, especially considering the concentration of its population and critical infrastructure in coastal areas. Approximately 85% of the population in the UAE and over 90% of its infrastructure are situated in coastal areas, rendering the country susceptible to even minor rises in sea levels. This vulnerability increases the risk of coastal erosion and flooding in low-lying areas.

Recognizing the potential devastation and economic consequences of climate change, the UAE is driven to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance climate adaptation efforts. The commitment to Net Zero is a strategic move to safeguard the country from the increasing frequency and magnitude of natural disasters. By taking proactive measures, the UAE aims to mitigate the impact of rising temperatures, sea level rise, and other climate-related challenges on its critical infrastructure, coastal areas, and unique ecosystems. In essence, the Net Zero plan is a vital component of the UAE's comprehensive strategy to ensure climate resilience and protect the well-being of its population and environment (UNFCCC, 2023).

UAE has taken decisive steps to address climate change and prepare for its impacts by establishing a comprehensive climate and energy policy. The National Climate Change Plan 2017-2050, adopted in 2017, outlines strategies for managing greenhouse gas emissions, climate adaptation, and innovative economic diversification driven by the private sector. Given the UAE's vulnerable arid environment, a National Adaptation Program is being implemented to identify sectoral risks and enhance climate resilience. Additionally, the National Energy Strategy 2050 aims to increase the share of clean energy to 50% of the installed power capacity mix by 2050, accompanied by a 40% reduction in final energy demand. These initiatives align with the UAE Green Agenda 2030, fostering collaboration between public and private sectors for a competitive and sustainable economy. (UNFCCC, 2021)

The UAE's Net-Zero 2050 initiative, led by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, involves comprehensive strategies across various sectors to reduce emissions and achieve environmental sustainability. Key initiatives include:

Clean Energy Projects (2017 - Present):

- a. UAE's investment in clean energy projects for 15 years.
- b. 'Energy Strategy 2050' aims to increase clean energy contribution to total energy production from 25% to 50% by 2050.
- c. Largest increase in renewable energy capacity globally over the past decade.

Water Desalination (Ongoing):

- a. Utilizing reverse water osmosis desalination plants.
- b. Investments valued at around US\$2bn.
- c. Conversion of plants to sea water reverse osmosis, reducing energy requirements and reliance on fossil fuels.

Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) (Operational since 2017):

- a. Operational carbon-capture facility capturing 800,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually.
- b. Challenges include the early stage of the CCS industry, lack of regulatory framework, and substantial investments required.

Transportation (Ongoing):

- a. Investments in sustainable mass transit systems.
- b. Road and Transport Authority (RTA) targeting 100% electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles across Dubai's public transport network by 2050.

Agricultural Technologies (Ongoing):

- a. Development of cultivation technologies to reduce carbon emissions from farming.
- b. Innovation in soil-less agriculture technologies.

Infrastructure (Legislative and Regulatory Reforms):

- a. Legislative and regulatory support for Net-Zero 2050.
- b. Regulations like Green Building and Sustainable Building Standards in Dubai and Estidama Pearl Rating System in Abu Dhabi.

Green Hydrogen (Future Plans):

- a. Plans to contribute around 25% of green hydrogen to the global fuel market by 2030.
- b. Lack of established regulatory framework for such projects.

Carbon Trading (Partnership with ADGM and ACX):

- a. Partnership to establish a carbon trading exchange and clearing house in Abu Dhabi.
- b. Regulated by Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) to attract investment in carbon emission reduction.

These initiatives collectively demonstrate the UAE's commitment to addressing climate change, enhancing sustainability, and achieving the ambitious Net-Zero 2050 goals. (Norton Rose Fulbright, 2022). From this remarkable achievement, it is undeniable that the UAE is indeed a dictatorship, as described by Jim Krane, he claims, "The rulers of the United Arab Emirates now uphold their legitimacy and authority by lavishly subsidizing their citizens, referred to as Emiratis, thus purchasing their support. (Krane Jim, 2009) In a dictatorship country like the UAE, decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a few, namely the sheikhs, allowing for swift and decisive actions.

The absence of complex domestic negotiations often streamlines the process, enabling the UAE to present a unified front in international negotiations. This centralised approach can be advantageous in achieving efficiency and quick responses to external demands. As discussed earlier, various aspects of the state uniformly work together in synergy to realise this plan without any significant obstacles since the planning of this initiative.

The UAE, a federation of seven Emirates, aligns climate and energy policies with legal roles. The UAE Council on Climate Change and Environment ensures coordination, and key federal entities, including the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, implement sustainable plans. Collective efforts in the seven Emirates aim to enhance life quality and environmental protection (UNFCCC, 2020). The centralised decision-making characteristic of authoritarian regimes may offer a streamlined approach to negotiations, minimizing the need for prolonged domestic debates.

The absence of complex domestic negotiations in a dictatorship could lead to more decisive and efficient decision-making. The UAE's leadership, unencumbered by extensive consultations, could potentially present a unified front in international negotiations. The efficiency of dictatorship extends to the implementation of negotiated agreements. The quick and direct execution of decisions without the need for broad consensus can enhance the UAE's credibility in the global diplomatic arena.

Moreover, the absence of prolonged domestic debates in a dictatorship facilitates a quick response to external demands. The UAE's leadership can swiftly adapt to changing international circumstances without being constrained by extensive consultations at the domestic level. This agility positions the UAE as a responsive and adaptable player in the global diplomatic landscape. Dictatorships often manage to present a united and cohesive stance in international negotiations by avoiding extensive domestic opposition. The centralised decision-making structure minimises dissent, ensuring that the negotiated outcomes align with the government's objectives. This cohesion enhances the UAE's negotiating power as it projects stability to the international community.

The negotiation and discussion process are still there but not too complex, because the UAE is not completely dictatorial. The formulation of the UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategic Initiative, involved a comprehensive societal approach led by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment. All government levels, including federal, emirate, city, and municipality, collaborated in crafting the roadmap to achieve the 2030 targets. This inclusive process comprised over 50 bilateral meetings with public and private entities, dedicated workshops with more than 110 touchpoints, and approximately 800 feedback points from various stakeholders.

To address climate change, the UAE promotes collaboration between the public and private sectors, involving key private entities and local NGOs in the development of its NDC (National Determined Contribution). The National Dialogue for Climate Ambition (NDCA) serves as a platform for climate collaboration across various sectors, holding monthly assemblies to discuss sectoral requirements and priorities. The UAE Alliance for Climate Action (UACA), in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund, supports the implementation of the UAE Climate-Responsible Companies Pledge, with over 90 signatories across key sectors.

The government also engages social groups, including the younger generation and women. The UAE prioritises youth development for climate engagement, launching initiatives like the Emirates Youth Climate Strategy in 2018 and the Masdar Youth for Sustainability

Platform in 2020. Events, eco-tourism camps, and programs like the Carbon Ambassadors Program aim to build youth capacity in climate and sustainability. Women are actively engaged in climate decision-making, with initiatives like Mubadala's Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER) fostering growth through training and networking opportunities. The UAE's NDC received endorsement from the highest executive power, the cabinet, following extensive stakeholder engagement (UNFCCC, 2023).

International Level

An international agreement on climate change that is legally binding is the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015). At the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on December 12, 2015, 196 Parties adopted this convention. On November 4 2016, the convention became actively operative. It aims "to limit temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels" and maintain "global average temperature increases well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" (UNFCCC, 2015). Going above the 1.5°C threshold increases the risk of much more severe climate change, such as heat waves, droughts, and more frequent and intense rainfall, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. To prevent global warming from rising above 1.5°C, greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 and then drop by 43% by 2030. The Paris Agreement represents a major turning point in the multilateral climate change process because it brings all nations together under one legally binding agreement to combat climate change and adapt to its effects for the first time. Applying the best available science to economic and social transformation is necessary to implement the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement is predicated on a five-year cycle in which countries undertake ever-more-ambitious climate action. Since 2020, countries have submitted their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), or country-specific climate action plans. The goal of every new NDC is to show progressively greater levels of ambition than the one before it. Countries outline the steps they will take to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement in their NDCs (UNFCCC, 2015). Countries also

convey the NDC actions they will take to build resilience in adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The UAE has established legislative frameworks to protect its natural wealth and has taken numerous proactive measures to address the phenomenon of climate change and lessen its detrimental effects on ecosystems and different economic sectors. As one of the first nations to endorse the "Kyoto Protocol" in 2005, which set limits on greenhouse gas emissions in industrialized nations, the nation in recent years established the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment. With the aim to support a long-term agreement on reducing emissions, the UAE was also the first nation in the region to sign the "Copenhagen Accord" during the 15th session of the "Conference of Parties (COP 15) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC." By submitting its national commitments to UNFCCC, it furthered the negotiations that resulted in the historic agreement to combat climate change that was reached at the 2015 Paris Climate Summit. The UAE signed the Paris Agreement on April 22, 2016 and ratified it on September 21, 2016 (UNFCCC, 2022). Additionally, the UAE is focused on accomplishing the UN-endorsed 2030 Sustainable Development Plan goals, which call for mobilising efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequality, and address climate change.

After presenting a sector-specific goal for clean and renewable energy in its first NDC in 2016, the UAE made a significant advancement by announcing economy-wide emissions reduction targets in its second NDC in 2020. These goals were stated as reductions in emissions from the case of business as usual. The nation then increased the ambition of these goals in a second, updated NDC, which was released in 2022. For the Third Update of Second NDC and as part of the UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategic Initiative, the country is taking further steps to significantly strengthen its emissions reduction target for 2030 in two ways (United Arab Emirates Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, 2023):

1. The previous commitment to reduce emissions with reference to a business-as-usual scenario was replaced by absolute emission reduction targets (compared to the 2019 base year) in the Third Update of the Second NDC.

2. The projected 208 MtCO₂e in 2030 net GHG emissions will be lowered to 182 MtCO₂e, as stated in the Updated Second NDC (2022). In contrast to the base year level of 2019, this indicates an absolute emissions reduction of 19% by 2030, despite persistent economic and population growth over this period. This represents a 40% reduction from the projected 2030 emissions if expressed in terms comparable to the Updated Second NDCs, which is a reduction from the business-as-usual scenario.

With a goal of reaching net zero emissions by 2050, the United Arab Emirates has made it clear that all nations must step up their efforts to combat climate change. This includes making stronger promises, creating detailed plans, and creating more extensive policy frameworks for various programs and initiatives. Ahead of COP28, the UAE has stepped up its efforts to cut emissions and created the UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategic Initiative, which includes comprehensive policies, revised near-term targets for 2030, and a shift in target setting methodology. The goal is to put the UAE on a course through 2030 that is compatible with reaching net zero emissions by 2050 by establishing functional and effective policy frameworks.

At the end of 2023, the UAE will host COP, the decision-making body responsible for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of UNFCCC. The upcoming round of international climate negotiations by the UN is called COP28. Approximately 70,000 delegates as well as numerous world leaders and government ministers from almost 200 countries are anticipated to attend the two-week-long summit in Dubai (Meredith, 2023). The goals of COPs are to establish a framework for countries to address climate change cooperatively and to promote a sense of shared responsibility. COP 28 in the United Arab Emirates is viewed as a midway point between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 deadline for a reduction in GHG emission. The UAE ratified the Paris Agreement and complied with the UNFCCC. As a result of their heavy reliance on the profits from the production and trade of fossil fuels, it is recognized as "Non-Annex I Parties" under the Paris Agreement—the UNFCCC splits nations into three major categories based on varying levels of commitment. The UAE committed to ambitious

NDCs and started working on the net-zero initiative even though it is not Annex I Parties. The UAE submitted its intended NDC in 2015 ahead of COP 21 in Paris, and it was one of the first countries in the Middle East to ratify the Paris Agreement (Josefson, 2023).

As the United Arab Emirates celebrates the 50th anniversary of its union, it aims to rank highly on global brand rankings, which gauge different aspects of a nation's relative strength. According to the Brand Finance Report, the UAE holds the 11th position globally in terms of brand strength, demonstrating this (Abbas, 2021). The report's focus in this classification was on the requirements for a successful Covid-19 response as well as the country's strength in the science and education pillars, particularly the Emirates Mars Mission. As a result, the United Arab Emirates topped the Middle East and North Africa brand strength ranking. Investment in renewable energy, both domestically and internationally, demonstrates the UAE's dedication to promotes clean energy and as a brand tool for the country in another area that is becoming more and more important on a global scale and is currently at the top of the agenda for nations as well as regional and international forums; combating climate change. The UAE has become a regional leader in solar and wind power after investing billions of dollars in domestic renewable energy projects. Since 2011, it has been the host country for the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA).

Expectations are high for more commitments and forward-thinking actions with the UAE COP 28 approaching. There is already evidence of the "COP 28 effect" in the area, which offers a chance for a paradigm change. As the host of the UAE COP 28 preparatory meetings, the UAE is demonstrating its dedication to promoting sustainable development and facilitating a global climate conversation. The United Arab Emirates will be in the spotlight and strategically positioning itself on the global stage by embracing the Net Zero initiative, recognizing it not only as a crucial step towards environmental sustainability, but also as a powerful tool for national branding. By embracing sustainability and committing to reducing carbon emissions, the country seeks to position itself as a forward-thinking and responsible global player. This not only enhances the nation's image but also opens doors for investments

in clean energy projects, technology, and infrastructure. The decision to brand UAE as a green nation and pioneer of zero emissions in the Arab and African regions is a strategic move. It gives a powerful message to the international community that the UAE is not only committed to environmental responsibility but is also actively leading the way in sustainable practices. As the UAE embarks on this journey towards a green and sustainable future, it recognizes the significance of international collaboration. The Net Zero initiative serves as a platform for the UAE to engage with global partners, share best practices, and contribute to the collective effort to combat climate change. By aligning its national brand with environmental consciousness, the UAE is not just investing in a green future but also securing its position as a key player in the global economy of the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

As one of the biggest producers of fossil fuels or oil, the government of UAE has taken a step to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels for its economic gain, not only to combat climate change but also took advantage to turn things around and find another way to gain some income apart from fossil fuels. As the first country to sign and ratify the Paris Agreement in the region, the UAE also announced its initiative to attain zero carbon emissions by 2050. The UAE is strategically positioning itself on the global stage by embracing the Net Zero initiative, recognizing it not only as a crucial step towards environmental sustainability but also as a powerful tool for national branding.

The Net Zero initiative also serves as a platform for the UAE to engage with global partners to share best practices and contribute to the collective effort to combat climate change. In an effort for The Net Zero Initiative, the government has made programs related to the initiative in many sectors which are predicted will enhance their export potential of green goods thus also could create tons of new jobs. The commitment to clean energy targets, as outlined in the National Energy Strategy 2050, is complemented by comprehensive environmental policies within the National Climate Change Plan. Bureaucratic coordination,

facilitated by entities like the UAE Council on Climate Change and Environment, ensures policy alignment across different government levels. Additionally, collaboration with NGOs and youth initiatives underscores the commitment to inclusive discussions and active youth participation in climate action.

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