

Peaceful Coexistence and the Consolidation of a Culture of Peace as an Approach to Enhancing Development in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

This research addresses the topic of peaceful coexistence and the consolidation of a culture of peace as a pivotal approach to enhancing development in the United Arab Emirates. It analyzes the conceptual and value frameworks underpinning this approach and demonstrates its relationship to social stability and comprehensive progress. The research is based on the premise that coexistence is no longer a secondary social dimension but has become a structural element in building the modern state, given its role in managing cultural and religious diversity positively, thus supporting social unity and cohesion. The research also highlights the legislative and institutional foundations, the educational and cultural role, and the contributions of civil society and the media in supporting a culture of tolerance and dialogue, considering them effective tools for translating values into daily practices. It emphasizes the integration of these dimensions in building a social environment characterized by mutual respect and trust, which directly impacts quality of life and strengthens the sense of social security and belonging. The analysis confirms that the success of this experience is linked to a clear vision that makes social peace the foundation upon which development policies are based. The research concludes that peaceful coexistence constitutes a strategic pillar for sustainable development, as it provides a conducive environment for production, investment, and innovation strengthens the social capital upon which advanced societies are built. This model's sustainability requires continuous development of policies and programs, enhanced public awareness, and keeping pace with future challenges related to social and digital transformations. Thus, peaceful coexistence emerges in the UAE experience as a long-term developmental choice, integrating ethical and institutional dimensions within a comprehensive framework.

Keywords: Peaceful Coexistence, Tolerance, Culture of Peace, Development, United Arab Emirates

Introduction

Peaceful coexistence in the contemporary era represents one of the fundamental pillars for building stable states capable of achieving comprehensive and sustainable development. It is no longer viewed merely as an abstract moral value or a cultural slogan, but rather as a strategic approach to managing diversity within modern societies. Religious, cultural, and ethnic pluralism, which historically constituted a source of conflict in many contexts, has increasingly become, in successful developmental experiences, a source of cultural enrichment and a form of soft power that enhances a state's regional and international standing.

From this perspective, peaceful coexistence constitutes a supportive environment for social stability. It contributes to reducing tensions, strengthening trust among different components of society, and creating a general climate that encourages productivity, creativity, and civic participation. In this context, the United Arab Emirates represents a notable model that has systematically sought to transform the values of tolerance and coexistence into an integral part of its social structure and developmental vision. As a result, social peace has become a functional component of the development process rather than merely a byproduct of it (Al-Mutairi, 2021).

This orientation has been reflected in public policies and institutional initiatives aimed at establishing a value system based on respect for others and the protection of human dignity regardless of cultural or religious background. The promotion of a culture of peace in the UAE has been linked to the development of supportive legislation, educational and awareness programs, and community initiatives that encourage dialogue and mutual understanding. These efforts have contributed to the formation of a collective consciousness that perceives diversity as a natural and positive phenomenon.

The interaction between societal values and developmental policies has produced a model demonstrating that economic and urban development cannot achieve sustainability in an environment characterized by division or discrimination. Rather, social stability resulting from the consolidation of a culture of coexistence constitutes a prerequisite for attracting investment, enhancing productivity, and improving quality of life. This reflects a deep understanding of the reciprocal relationship between social peace and comprehensive development (Al-Falah, 2025).

In addition to governmental efforts, community initiatives and cultural and educational institutions have played a significant role in transforming the values of coexistence into daily practices and deeply rooted social behaviors. These institutions have worked to promote a culture of dialogue, create spaces for interaction among different nationalities and cultures, and reinforce the principles of mutual respect and shared responsibility toward society. The interaction between official frameworks and community engagement has created a highly harmonious social environment, reflected in indicators of social security, quality of life, and overall stability.

Within this conceptual and empirical context, the present study aims to examine the role of peaceful coexistence as a foundational driver of sustainable development in the United Arab Emirates. Specifically, it seeks to analyze how policies, institutional frameworks, and

community practices collectively contribute to fostering a culture of coexistence and how this, in turn, influences key dimensions of development, including social stability, economic productivity, and quality of life. The scope of the study is limited to the UAE as a case study, drawing on policy analysis, existing empirical data, and relevant academic literature to provide a comprehensive and contextually grounded assessment.

By clearly delineating its objectives and scope, this study intends to offer a focused and systematic analysis that contributes to a deeper understanding of the interdependence between social peace and sustainable development, while also providing insights that may be applicable to other pluralistic societies.

First: The Conceptual Framework of Peaceful Coexistence and the Culture of Peace

In contemporary social thought, peaceful coexistence is understood as an organizational condition governing relationships within society, based on the rational and institutional management of differences in a manner that ensures stability and preserves human dignity. The concept does not merely refer to the avoidance of direct conflict, but rather to a form of positive social interaction that allows different groups to share the public sphere without domination or exclusion. This understanding is grounded in several guiding values, foremost among them mutual recognition, respect for cultural particularities, and adherence to legal norms regulating rights and responsibilities.

Peaceful coexistence also includes a communicative dimension that encourages dialogue as a civilizational mechanism for resolving disagreements. This approach reduces the likelihood of social tension and strengthens trust among various components of society. From this perspective, peaceful coexistence becomes a reference framework for understanding how cohesive societies can be built, capable of accommodating diversity without allowing it to become a threat to unity or stability (Al-Mutairi, 2021).

The culture of peace represents the ethical and behavioral extension of peaceful coexistence. It focuses on shaping a moral and cognitive system that rejects violence and promotes understanding and tolerance. Such a culture does not emerge spontaneously but develops through cumulative educational and social processes beginning within the family, extending to schools, and reinforced by media and cultural institutions. In this sense, the culture of peace represents a long-term process aimed at reorienting both individual and collective behavior toward patterns more consistent with principles of justice and mutual respect.

This process depends on establishing equality before the law, ensuring equal opportunities, and providing safe spaces for expression and social participation. Feelings of marginalization or injustice can undermine any attempt to establish social peace. Therefore, the culture of peace cannot be reduced to moral discourse or symbolic initiatives. Rather, it must be understood as an integrated system in which educational, legislative, and institutional dimensions intersect to create a social environment that supports stability and cohesion (Al-Falah, 2025).

When these concepts are linked to the developmental context, it becomes evident that peaceful coexistence and the culture of peace constitute structural foundations for the success of long-term development projects. Development, at its core, is a societal process

requiring the active participation of various social groups, and it cannot be effectively achieved in an environment characterized by distrust or social fragmentation. Social stability resulting from the consolidation of peaceful values directs collective energies toward productivity rather than conflict, strengthens the sense of belonging, and reinforces shared responsibility for the public good. Consequently, coexistence evolves from a social value into a factor supporting the economic and institutional structure of society by creating a favorable environment for investment, strengthening social capital, and enhancing the capacity of society to adapt to change (Kahal, 2019).

In the practical context, the United Arab Emirates stands out as a tangible example of the institutional implementation of peaceful coexistence within a clear developmental framework. Coexistence has not been confined to moral discourse but has been integrated into public policies and long-term strategic visions. The state has adopted a comprehensive approach that includes legislation criminalizing hate speech and discrimination, national initiatives promoting tolerance, the designation of a national Year of Tolerance, and the establishment of institutions dedicated to promoting dialogue and openness.

This orientation is also reflected in the social environment of the UAE, which hosts numerous nationalities and cultures living within a unified legal framework that protects rights and defines responsibilities in a balanced manner. Such a model has contributed to strengthening social stability, increasing levels of trust between individuals and institutions, and creating an attractive environment for investment, work, and creativity. As a result, peaceful coexistence in the UAE has become a strategic pillar supporting the country's economic competitiveness and international standing, demonstrating that effective management of diversity constitutes one of the key drivers of sustainable development in modern states.

Second: Legislative and Institutional Foundations Supporting Peaceful Coexistence in the UAE

The legislative framework represents one of the principal pillars for consolidating peaceful coexistence, as it provides binding rules that regulate social relations and ensure the protection of rights based on equality and non-discrimination. A clear legal system limits exclusionary practices, strengthens trust in state institutions, and transforms diversity management into an institutional matter rather than one dependent on individual interpretations or unstable social balances.

In the Emirati context, support for coexistence has been closely associated with the enactment of legislation promoting tolerance and prohibiting hate speech and discrimination. Such laws reinforce the concept of citizenship grounded in respect for human dignity regardless of background. This legal environment performs not only a deterrent function but also conveys a symbolic message that social peace is a national choice protected by law, thereby transforming ethical values into enforceable legal obligations (Al-Mutairi, 2021).

Alongside legislation, institutional structures play a decisive role in translating principles into practical policies and programs. The establishment of entities dedicated to promoting tolerance and social cohesion reflects the transition from theoretical discourse to systematic planning and implementation. These institutions coordinate efforts across sectors, launch

awareness initiatives, organize cultural dialogue events, and support research examining the realities and challenges of coexistence.

Furthermore, they contribute to building partnerships with educational, cultural, and community organizations, ensuring the expansion and sustainability of their influence. Institutional work thus provides a continuous mechanism for consolidating a culture of peace, transforming it from isolated initiatives into a public policy with defined objectives and measurable indicators (Al-Falah, 2025).

Within the United Arab Emirates, several legislative and institutional mechanisms give practical expression to this framework. At the legal level, Federal Decree-Law No. 2 of 2015 on Combating Discrimination and Hatred established a clear penal framework criminalizing actions and rhetoric that threaten social peace or incite religious or ethnic tensions. This reflects the transition from value-based guidance to binding legal enforcement. In addition, the Constitution of the UAE affirms equality before the law and guarantees fundamental freedoms within the framework of public order, providing a normative foundation for managing diversity and protecting rights.

Institutionally, the establishment of the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence marked a significant step in transforming coexistence from occasional initiatives into a structured public policy supported by administrative planning, coordination, and impact evaluation. National initiatives such as the Year of Tolerance in 2019 mobilized society around a unifying discourse promoting mutual respect. Moreover, the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi represented an international initiative reinforcing the UAE's image as a global platform for intercultural dialogue.

Third: The Role of Education and Culture in Promoting Coexistence and Peace

The educational system constitutes one of the most important strategic channels for building societal awareness and shaping the intellectual and behavioral orientations of individuals, particularly during early stages of life. Educational institutions are not limited to transmitting academic knowledge but also play a formative role in cultivating values, enhancing communication skills, and developing the ability to accept differences.

Integrating concepts such as tolerance, pluralism, and dialogue into curricula and extracurricular activities represents a fundamental approach to preparing generations capable of living harmoniously in multicultural environments. Education also contributes to dismantling stereotypes and strengthening mutual understanding, thereby improving social relations and reducing exclusionary tendencies (Al-Akili, 2020).

Cultural activity complements the educational role by providing a broader framework in which shared meanings, symbols, and values are constructed. Cultural institutions, including cultural centers, libraries, museums, and artistic events, create spaces for interaction between diverse cultures and emphasize common human values rather than differences. Through literature, art, and cultural exchange, a humanistic discourse emerges that promotes dignity, mutual respect, and ethical awareness among individuals. In this sense, culture functions as a soft power instrument that nurtures social peace and reinforces positive attitudes toward cooperation and coexistence (Al-Falah, 2025).

Fourth: Community Initiatives and the Role of Civil Society in Promoting Coexistence

Civil society represents a vital partner in promoting peaceful coexistence due to its proximity to diverse social groups and its flexibility in reaching different segments of society. Non-governmental organizations, voluntary associations, and community initiatives play an important role in spreading a culture of dialogue, strengthening solidarity, and organizing activities that bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds within positive social contexts.

Such direct interaction helps reduce social distances, enhances mutual trust, and transforms the concept of coexistence into tangible lived experiences rather than remaining confined to theoretical discourse (Ghazwan, 2021).

Community initiatives also possess the advantage of responding directly to societal needs through awareness programs, workshops, and cultural campaigns that address issues of diversity and intercultural understanding in accessible language. These initiatives often serve as bridges between residents from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, strengthening their sense of belonging to a shared social environment governed by mutual respect and collective responsibility (Khalawi and Badiwi, 2018).

In the UAE, civil society organizations such as the Emirates Red Crescent have contributed to strengthening humanitarian solidarity through relief and development programs that promote compassion and social responsibility both domestically and internationally. Youth initiatives under institutions such as the Federal Youth Authority have also played a role in encouraging dialogue, volunteerism, and intercultural interaction, transforming coexistence into a daily social practice based on cooperation.

Fifth: Peaceful Coexistence as a Foundation for Sustainable Development

Peaceful coexistence is intrinsically linked to sustainable development, extending beyond ethical considerations to structural influence on economic and social progress. Societies characterized by stable relations based on trust and respect for diversity are better able to direct their resources toward construction and productivity rather than conflict management. Social stability enhances institutional efficiency, reduces social transaction costs, and creates an environment conducive to economic growth.

At the human level, a culture of peace contributes to strengthening social capital, defined as the networks of relationships, trust, and shared values that facilitate cooperation within society. Higher levels of trust encourage civic participation in development initiatives and reinforce collective responsibility for the public good. This environment also enhances quality of life by fostering feelings of security, belonging, and social acceptance, thereby improving psychological stability and productivity (Othman and Babiker, 2025).

Strategically, societies that successfully manage diversity through peaceful coexistence demonstrate greater capacity to adapt to global transformations, whether economic, cultural, or technological. Coexistence fosters openness to knowledge exchange, stimulates innovation, and strengthens international reputation, making such societies more attractive to talent and investment. Consequently, peaceful coexistence should not be viewed as a

separate social dimension but rather as a foundational pillar supporting sustainable development and long-term societal resilience (Al-Karbi et al., 2024).

In the case of the United Arab Emirates, peaceful coexistence has been integrated into long-term national development strategies. This is reflected in national initiatives such as UAE Vision 2021, which emphasized the creation of a cohesive society that preserves its identity while embracing openness. The Centennial 2071 strategy further reinforced this orientation by prioritizing quality of life and global competitiveness as central national objectives.

Thus, the UAE experience illustrates that peaceful coexistence functions as a strategic enabler linking social stability, economic competitiveness, and institutional resilience. The success of this model lies not merely in managing diversity but in transforming it into a comparative advantage that supports long-term growth and strengthens the country's position within the global system.

Peaceful Coexistence and the Consolidation of a Culture of Peace as a Pathway to Enhancing Development in the United Arab Emirates

Peaceful coexistence in the modern era represents one of the fundamental pillars for building stable states capable of achieving comprehensive and sustainable development. It is no longer perceived merely as an abstract moral value or a cultural slogan, but rather as a strategic approach to managing diversity within contemporary societies. Religious, cultural, and ethnic plurality, which historically constituted a source of conflict in many contexts, has in successful development experiences become a source of cultural enrichment and a form of soft power that enhances a state's regional and international standing.

From this perspective, peaceful coexistence emerges as a supportive environment for social stability. It contributes to reducing tensions, strengthening trust among different components of society, and creating a general climate conducive to productivity, creativity, and civic participation. In this context, the United Arab Emirates represents a notable example of a state that has systematically sought to transform the culture of tolerance and coexistence into an integral component of its social structure and developmental vision. Consequently, social peace has become a functional element within the development process rather than merely a subsequent outcome of it (Al-Mutairi, 2021).

This orientation has been reflected in public policies and institutional initiatives aimed at establishing a value system grounded in respect for others and the preservation of human dignity regardless of cultural or religious background. In the UAE, the promotion of a culture of peace has been closely associated with the development of supportive legislation, educational and awareness programs, and community initiatives that foster dialogue and mutual understanding. These efforts have contributed to shaping a collective awareness that perceives diversity as a natural and positive phenomenon.

The interaction between societal values and development policies has produced a model demonstrating that economic and urban development cannot achieve sustainability in an environment marked by division or discrimination. Rather, the social stability generated by the consolidation of coexistence constitutes a prerequisite for attracting investment, enhancing productivity, and improving quality of life. This reflects a profound understanding

of the reciprocal relationship between social peace and comprehensive development (Al-Falah, 2025).

Alongside governmental efforts, community initiatives as well as cultural and educational institutions have played an important role in transforming the values of coexistence into everyday practices and deeply rooted social behaviors. These institutions have promoted a culture of dialogue, created spaces for interaction among individuals of different nationalities and cultures, and reinforced principles of mutual respect and shared responsibility toward society. The interaction between official frameworks and social initiatives has contributed to creating a socially harmonious environment whose effects are reflected in indicators of social security, quality of life, and general stability. Accordingly, the study of peaceful coexistence in the UAE cannot be separated from its broader development trajectory, as the experience clearly demonstrates that a culture of peace is not merely a secondary cultural dimension but a fundamental entry point for promoting development, ensuring its sustainability, and building a society capable of progress in an increasingly diverse and dynamic world (Al-Karbi et al., 2024).

First: The Conceptual Framework of Peaceful Coexistence and the Culture of Peace

In contemporary social thought, peaceful coexistence is viewed as an organizational condition governing relationships within society, based on the rational and institutional management of differences in a manner that ensures stability and preserves human dignity. The concept extends beyond the mere avoidance of direct conflict, referring instead to a form of positive social interaction that allows diverse groups to share the public sphere without domination or exclusion. This vision is grounded in a set of governing values, foremost among them mutual recognition, respect for cultural particularities, and adherence to legal frameworks regulating rights and responsibilities.

The concept also contains an important communicative dimension, manifested in the promotion of dialogue as a civilized mechanism for resolving disagreements. Such an approach reduces the likelihood of social tensions and enhances trust among various societal groups. From this perspective, peaceful coexistence becomes a conceptual framework for understanding how cohesive societies can be built while accommodating diversity without allowing it to threaten unity or stability (Al-Mutairi, 2021).

The culture of peace represents the ethical and behavioral extension of peaceful coexistence. It focuses on shaping a mental and moral system that rejects violence and promotes understanding and tolerance. This culture does not develop spontaneously, but emerges through cumulative educational and social processes beginning within the family, extending to schools, and becoming consolidated through media and cultural institutions. It therefore represents a long-term process aimed at redirecting individual and collective behavior toward patterns that align with principles of justice and mutual respect.

The development of such a culture requires the establishment of equality before the law, the guarantee of equal opportunities, and the provision of safe spaces for expression and social participation. Feelings of marginalization or injustice can undermine any attempt to consolidate social peace. For this reason, the culture of peace should not be reduced to moral discourse or symbolic activity; rather, it must be understood as an integrated system in which

educational, legislative, and institutional dimensions interact to create a social environment conducive to stability and cohesion (Al-Falah, 2025).

When these concepts are linked to the developmental context, it becomes evident that peaceful coexistence and the culture of peace constitute structural foundations for the success of long-term development projects. Development is fundamentally a societal process that requires active participation from diverse groups, and it cannot be effectively realized in an environment characterized by mistrust or social fragmentation. Social stability generated by the consolidation of peace values directs societal energies toward productivity and creativity rather than conflict. It also strengthens feelings of belonging and shared responsibility toward the public good.

In this sense, coexistence evolves from a social value into a supporting component of economic and institutional structures, providing a favorable environment for investment, strengthening social capital, and enhancing society's ability to adapt to ongoing transformations. Consequently, the conceptual framework of peaceful coexistence is closely linked to contemporary development theory, representing a key interpretive element for understanding the dynamic relationship between social stability and comprehensive progress (Kahal, 2019).

Within this practical context, the United Arab Emirates stands out as a prominent example of the effective institutionalization of peaceful coexistence within a clear developmental framework. Coexistence has not remained confined to value-based discourse but has been integrated into public policies and long-term strategic visions. The state has adopted a comprehensive approach that includes enacting legislation criminalizing hate speech and discrimination, launching national initiatives promoting tolerance, designating a national "Year of Tolerance," and establishing institutions dedicated to strengthening dialogue and openness.

These measures are reflected in a social environment characterized by the presence of multiple nationalities and cultures living under a unified legal framework that guarantees rights and defines responsibilities in a balanced manner. This model has contributed to strengthening social stability, increasing trust between individuals and institutions, and creating an attractive environment for investment, employment, and innovation. Consequently, peaceful coexistence in the UAE has become a strategic pillar supporting economic competitiveness and international standing while demonstrating that effective diversity management constitutes a key driver of sustainable development in modern states.

Second: Legislative and Institutional Foundations Supporting Peaceful Coexistence in the UAE

The legislative framework represents one of the primary pillars in consolidating peaceful coexistence, as it provides binding rules regulating relationships within society and ensuring the protection of rights based on equality and non-discrimination. A clear legal system limits exclusionary practices, strengthens trust in state institutions, and transforms diversity management into an institutional matter rather than one dependent on individual interpretations or unstable balances.

In the UAE context, support for coexistence has been closely associated with the adoption of legislation promoting tolerance and prohibiting hate speech and discrimination. Such measures reinforce the concept of citizenship grounded in respect for human dignity regardless of background. This legal environment performs not only a deterrent function but also conveys a symbolic message that social peace is a national choice protected by law, thereby transforming ethical values into enforceable institutional commitments (Al-Mutairi, 2021).

In addition to legislation, institutional structures play a decisive role in translating principles into practical policies and programs. The establishment of institutions dedicated to issues of tolerance and social cohesion reflects the transition from theoretical discourse to organized planning and implementation. These institutions coordinate efforts across sectors, launch awareness initiatives, organize events promoting intercultural dialogue, and support research that examines the realities and challenges of coexistence.

They also contribute to building partnerships with educational, cultural, and community organizations, ensuring broader societal impact and sustainability. In this sense, institutional action provides a permanent mechanism for consolidating a culture of peace and transforming it from scattered initiatives into a public policy with defined objectives and measurable indicators (Al-Falah, 2025).

The legislative and institutional dimensions operate in an integrated manner to create a supportive environment for coexistence. While legislation establishes the regulatory framework, institutions activate this framework through concrete programs and field practices. This integration reduces the gap between legal texts and practical implementation and strengthens the effectiveness of efforts aimed at building a cohesive society capable of responding to emerging challenges associated with cultural diversity and rapid social change (Al-Jubouri, 2023).

Within the UAE, this framework is evident in several legislative and institutional tools that provide practical implementation. On the legal level, Federal Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 on Combating Discrimination and Hatred established a clear criminal framework addressing acts and rhetoric that threaten social peace or incite religious or ethnic tensions. This legislation reflects the state's transition from value-based guidance to binding legal regulation.

Institutionally, the establishment of the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence represents a significant step toward transforming coexistence from occasional initiatives into a structured public policy supported by administrative planning, coordination, and impact assessment. Initiatives such as the "Year of Tolerance 2019" have also played a key role in mobilizing society around a unified national discourse promoting mutual respect. Furthermore, the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi represents an initiative with global significance that reinforces the country's image as a platform for intercultural dialogue. Through this integration between legal and institutional mechanisms, the UAE has reduced the gap between normative frameworks and practical implementation. Consequently, coexistence in the UAE is no longer simply an ethical value but a component of the country's organizational structure, supported by legislative instruments, performance indicators, and

proactive policies that ensure its sustainability and link it directly to long-term stability and development goals.

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