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# A comparative analysis of immigration in Singapore and the United Arab Emirates

Trends, policy, and international students

Master's Thesis in Globalization: Transnationalism and Culture

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## **Abbreviations**

**EDB**

Education Development Board

**MOHRE**

Ministry for Human Resources and Emiratization

**NIC**

National Integration Council

**NTU**

Nanyang Technical University

**NUS**

National University of Singapore

**NYU**

New York University

**OECD**

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**PAP**

People's Action Party

**PEP**

Personalized Employment Pass

**QS**

Quacquarelli Symonds

**UAE**

United Arab Emirates

**UIS**

UNESCO Institute for Statistics

**UN**

United Nations



## Summary

This thesis is a comparative analysis of three aspects of migration in two countries with liberal immigration systems: Singapore and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These three aspects explored in this thesis are immigration trends, immigration policy, and international student migration. This thesis compared these three aspects in both Singapore and the UAE. It also explores the interrelations between these three aspects. This thesis examines both why these countries are attractive destinations for migrants and why these countries encourage migration through liberal policies.

This thesis is the result of a desk study. Reports and studies sanctioned by the Singaporean and Emirati governments comprise the majority of the sources used in this thesis. News articles and reports from non-governmental entities were also used to collect data. Data collected included statistics, law and policy documents, and press releases which related to the aspects of migration which were explored in this thesis. This data was qualitatively analyzed to gain an understanding of receiving migration in both countries and to understand the motivations behind both countries' immigration policies.

The push-pull model was the theory most employed in the analytical chapters of this thesis. It was supplemented with other theories and frameworks to address the weaknesses of the push-pull model. Using this model, I identified some factors that make Singapore and the UAE attractive destination countries. Both countries attract labor migrants of all skill levels who come for the prospect of good opportunities and higher wages. I discuss how a liberal migration policy facilitates this inward flow of migrants. However, these countries, in particular the UAE, have more restrictive integration policies and challenges to continued legal status that can act as a push factor causing return migration.

Both countries use migration to benefit the development of the country, namely to strengthen their economy. One of the main goals exhibited by both countries is attracting skilled migrants to contribute to the prosperity of the workforce and to further develop the country into a knowledge economy. International education is also used to promote research and attract and train talent.



## 1.0 Introduction

This thesis is a comparative analysis of receiving parts of two immigration systems: Singapore and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These countries provide two interesting cases which I will explore in this thesis. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze aspects of the systems of immigration in Singapore and the UAE. For both of these countries, I describe three aspects of immigration: general immigration, immigration policy, and international student migration. These countries make interesting cases because they both have liberal immigration policies which have led to some of the highest net migration rates in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017a). They also have burgeoning higher education sectors and have made a concerted effort to develop a knowledge economy (Knight, 2011). I seek to provide the reader with information regarding the general landscape of migration in Singapore and the UAE. This includes the immigration trends and patterns which exist in these countries. I will also provide an overview of immigration policies put into place by the governments of these countries. In addition, I will address an under-represented, yet important, aspect of immigration shared by both these countries: international student immigration. In addition to a high percentage of foreign workers living in these countries, both these countries have a notable percentage of international students. Singapore and the UAE have established themselves as international student hubs attracting international students and transnational institutions (Knight, 2011). The prevalence of international students in Singapore and the UAE make international student immigration a relevant and important aspect of overall immigration trends in these two countries.

My research of immigration in Singapore and the UAE can be categorized into three sections: general migration, immigration policy, and international student migration. This thesis will address the following questions each corresponding to one of these three sections:

- What general migration themes and trends characterize immigration into Singapore and the United Arab Emirates?
- What key immigration policies shape immigration in Singapore and the UAE and what effect have these policies had on immigration in these two countries?
- What is the state of international student migration in Singapore and the UAE?
- What are the connections, if any, between general migration policies and international student migration in Singapore and the UAE?

The general objective of this study is to examine immigration in Singapore and the UAE and compare immigration trends and policy in both countries. This thesis has the following research objectives:

- Provide insight into the general immigration trends in Singapore and the UAE and their effects.
- Explore the immigration policies put into place by these two countries.
- Identify the effects national immigration policy have in each country and on its migration trends.
- Examine a specific aspect of immigration that is present in both countries: international students.
- Examine and compare the distribution of internationally-mobile students in Singapore and the UAE.
- Compare the immigration trends, policies, and international student regimes in both countries.
- Examine the connections between the identified aspects of migration and how these parts relate to each other.

In this thesis, I will also evaluate the similarities and differences which exist in these two cases of migration. This will include migration trends, migration policy, and the motivations which affect policy development. I will also compare and contrast the international student regimes in Singapore and the UAE. This includes trends in international student migration, policies towards international students, and the different strategies employed by both countries in the recruitment of international students.

Data used in this study was gathered in the form of a desk study using various resources. Those resources included press releases, government released reports and data, organizational reports, news articles, and websites. Textual and numerical data from these resources was analyzed to contribute to the understanding of this topic.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. The purpose of the introduction chapter is to introduce my topic and research questions. Chapter 2 is a description of my research methodology. In this chapter, I discuss how and why I chose the methods I used in this thesis. I will also discuss the reasons I chose to focus on the three topics I cover in this

thesis. In the third chapter, I will review the existing literature. This chapter will provide the necessary and relevant background information regarding migration topics such as general migration, international student migration, and family migration. The information presented in this chapter will contribute to the reader's understanding so that they have the necessary background information to benefit their understanding of my research results. In addition, this chapter contains an introduction to the theoretical and analytical framework and the migration theories used in this thesis. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 correspond to my three topics of research and are where I will analyze the data I gathered in the course of this study. Chapter 4 discusses general migration trends and immigration in Singapore and the UAE. In Chapter 5, I provide an overview of the immigration policy as presented by the governments of Singapore and the UAE. Chapter 6 focuses specifically on international students studying in these countries and these country's status as international education hubs. Chapter 7 is the summary and conclusion.





## **2.0 Methodology**

In this chapter, I will discuss the methods of data collection I used while conducting research for this thesis. This includes the research decisions I made in the process and the reasoning behind those decisions. I will describe my data set and how resources were found and selected. Then I will discuss the categories I constructed in my research and how I decided on the topics which I focus on in this thesis.

### **2.1 Method Selection: First Encounters in the Field**

There were some limitations that influenced my choice of methodology. Due to financial constraints as well as a lack of time, I was unable to travel to either of these countries to conduct research on location. Distance and time constraints both influenced my decisions regarding which methods to use. Cultural and political circumstances also influenced my choice of methods, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter. In order to compensate for these limitations, this thesis is the result of a desk study. I used online sources collected using the internet to obtain my data.

My research strategy can be categorized into two stages. Stage one was my original plan and stage two was my adjusted plan which was created to deal with the roadblocks experienced during the first stage. My original plan, or stage one, was to focus solely on international students, specifically tertiary students, in Singapore and the UAE. This study would have been a comparative analysis of the international student regimes in these countries. Much of my original focus was on comparing these countries as international education hubs and discovering the reasons why they are considered to be international education hubs. This was to include reasons why they have been positioned, either intentionally or incidentally, as international education hubs and reasons why they hosted a large number of international students in relation to their population and size. This was to be a qualitative study based on interviews with a combination of expert informants, professionals working in the tertiary education sector, and international students in both Singapore and the UAE. The intent was to conduct interviews over a video conferencing service, such as Skype. The purpose of interviews with expert informants and professionals in the local education sectors was meant to provide me with insight regarding their personal experiences working in the globalized education sector in these countries. I hoped to interview students to gain insight into their

personal motivations for studying in the country and their experience as an international student. This information was to be supplemented with previous literature, news articles, reports, and other data sources.

Originally, I had hoped to find approximately six informants. They were to be divided equally between both countries. I would have ideally liked to have a few more informants. However, a short time-frame for writing this thesis made that unrealistic so instead I aimed for six informants. An effort was made to find informants through my supervisor's professional network as he has contacts in both countries. It was more difficult to find willing and qualified participants to participate in my research than I had anticipated. After several unsuccessful attempts, I determined that this would not be a sufficient method of data collection. I was unable to get enough informants and continuing to search for participants was unlikely to produce a sufficient number of participants. Potential informants that I approached doubted they had the necessary relevant knowledge to be of use to my research. Others were hesitant to speak due to political reasons. This is particularly the case in the United Arab Emirates. Potential informants contacted in the UAE were non-citizens and are living in the country with temporary residence permits. Because of their immigration status, they do not want to risk the continuation of their residence permits by doing something that could potentially cause them to not have their visa renewed. Even though efforts would have been taken to ensure the identity of the informant was not published, I was unable to find willing and qualified participants. Even if I had found a willing and suitable participant, options for communicating with informants in the UAE were limited because Skype was recently blocked in the UAE, causing the need to find another easily accessible and affordable audio or video calling provider to use for interviews.

In my first stage, I had hoped to interview international students in both Singapore and the UAE. I wanted to interview them to gain an understanding regarding their personal motivations for studying in their respective host countries and their experiences thereof. Unfortunately, it became apparent early in the process that it would be more difficult to be connected with international students from either country. Interviews would also limit the number of students I could have as informants. It would have been better to have several participants. In an attempt to reach more potential informants, I attempted to reach out on a social media platform to find informants to fill out a questionnaire. Questions were written to discover a student's motivations for studying in either Singapore or the UAE. Many of the questions were

applicable to students in both countries. In addition, I had a couple of country-specific questions which I created based on my knowledge of the previous literature. However, these questionnaires were never distributed. After searching on social media to find potential informants, I discovered that it would be difficult to find an adequate number of respondents on social media. Many social media groups for international students in these countries explicitly limit group membership to international students in their particular country and forbid any posting by non-members. Due to a limited time-frame, it was deemed risky to spend too much time hoping to find a sufficiently sized group that would allow me to use their group to find participants. There was no guarantee that I would get a sufficient response even if a group permitted me to use their page to recruit informants. Because of these hindrances, this idea was also discarded in favor of finding a new method of data collection before it was too late to find other options for collection data. I refer to this new plan as stage two.

Stage two was accompanied by an adjustment to my thesis' topic. It became clear that it would be challenging to find enough data via open access sources on the internet to produce a complete study on international student regimes which also included individual experiences of international students. I would not have access to all the data I would need. This method was also lacking the crucial personal aspects which I had initially hoped to incorporate. Therefore, the decision was made to widen my topic. I chose cover migration trends and policies in Singapore and the UAE while still including a section that focuses on international students in both of these countries. I believe this to be the best choice as a general focus on immigration is important for understanding all of the aspects of international students. In the next sections I will discuss my stage two process and methodological decisions.

## **2.2 Types of Data Collected**

The second stage of my methodology decision making process involved the consideration of using the online sources originally intended to be supplemental data sources as my main source of data. This stage also required the collection of much more data in order to accommodate a more expansive desk study than I had originally intended. I found numerous additional online data sources that were suitable to use in this thesis. I was confident that I could then rely solely on these data sources and still have sufficient data for this thesis, especially with the addition of the two other aspects of immigration. Since my original plan did not include a thorough

exploration of general migration trends nor policy, I also had to collect data relating to those topics in stage two.

For the second stage I focused on obtaining data from a variety of sources that are freely available on the internet. I had already collected some such material to supplement interviews. After stage two was put into place, I found more of these types of data sources and gathered additional data to compensate for the adjustment of my topic. The data sources I decided to use during the second stage were all gathered online and consist primarily of press releases, governmental reports, non-governmental reports, news articles, and information from other relevant websites. The type of data collected from these sources include information and statistics concerning migration trends, immigration law, national immigration policy, and information regarding the international students and the international student regimes in both countries. Data collected was qualitatively analyzed. Due to the ever-changing nature of this field, I frequently reviewed the latest news and updates in the process of writing this thesis.

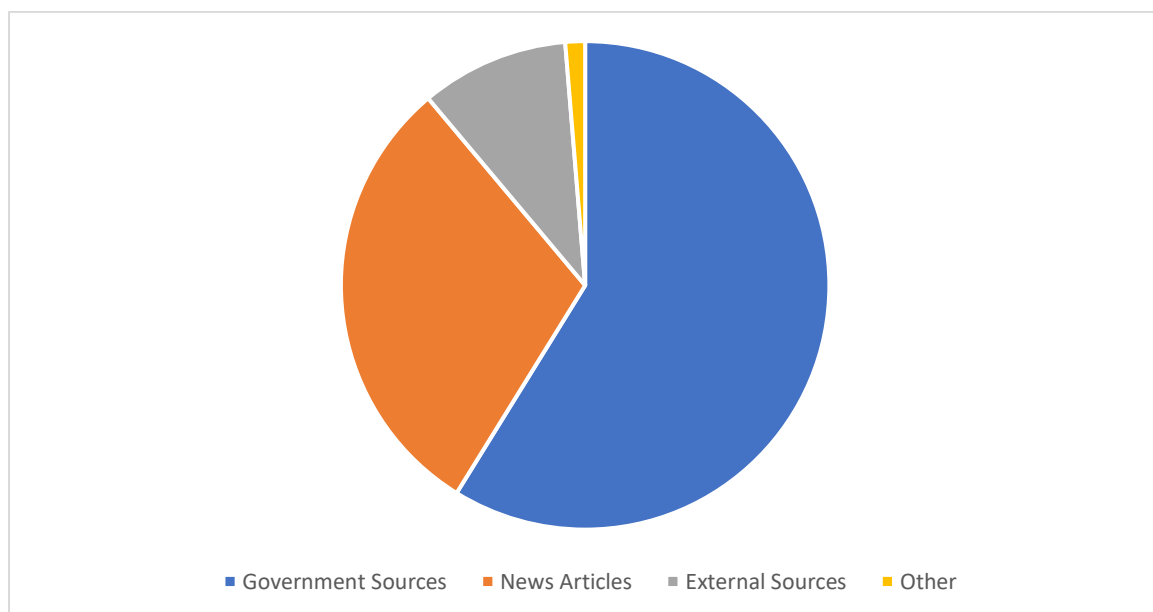
Effort was made to have symmetrical information to use in my comparative analysis. However, this was not always possible due to the lack of availability of some data sets. Both Singapore and the UAE withhold certain sets of data from the public. For example, one country may release numbers regarding how many people hold a certain type of visa and that the other may not. Because of this, it was impossible to obtain certain data. While this complicates the possibility of doing a complete comparison of these two countries, data from one country that lacked corresponding data from the other country was still included in order to provide a more complete picture of immigration in that country. Additionally, unique immigration situations present in both of these countries made it impossible to have truly symmetrical data. Both of these countries also use different categories, such as the categories corresponding to nationality. This often limited the kinds of comparisons I could make. Some data, such as data regarding migration trends, could not be legitimately compared in both countries.

Data was collected through open, online sources. The government of Singapore, the federal government of the UAE, and governments of individual emirates release some data for public access on their websites. Much of my data was collected from such websites. This data sources used include: governmental organizational reports regarding immigration trends, laws, policies, press releases, and numerical data.

Local newspapers from both Singapore and the UAE were also used to collect data. Articles provided information on policy changes and other facts and figures. Articles and editorials from these newspapers also provided me with insight into opinions regarding immigration held by residents in Singapore and the UAE. This proved to be very beneficial as I was unable to obtain such information through interviews.

I also obtained data from exterior entities, such as the OECD and the UN Population Division. Such organizations publish reports online regarding general immigration trends as well as regional and national trends. These reports include information regarding policies, immigration trends, and numerical data. Data from these reports was also used to supplement the other material I collected.

**Figure 1: Estimate of the percentage of data acquired from each type of data**



Note: Figure 1 is an estimate of how much of my data came from certain types of sources. It accounts for the fact that some sources were used to collect more data than others.

### **2.3 Analytical Approach**

While analyzing the data I had collected, I sought out trends and identified the most important data points. I conducted a qualitative analysis of my data. One way I did this was by coding data to evaluate the content of the data sources. I took careful notes on all the data I had collected. Through evaluating my notes, I was able to identify key words and data points to identify the most important aspects of immigration in both Singapore and the UAE. I then

analyzed the data gathered for both countries individually. I identified the key data points and used them to format my analytical chapters. After I had developed this data, I then began to compare my data sets. I searched for both similarities and key differences that appeared in both cases. These differences were then thoroughly explored. An effort was made to ensure that the differences I identified were actually a difference in reality or if it had been absent from my initial research.

In my research, I identified three thematic categories: (i) general migration, (ii) migration policies, and (iii) international students. The first two thematic categories which I identified are directly related to each other as one is often informed by the other. Government enacted policies regarding immigration both are influenced by general migration trends and influence trends in migration. Liberalized policies facilitate a growth in immigration and more restrictive immigration policies slow down or halt immigration. It is apparent that the policies which both these countries have implemented throughout history have an effect on immigration trends, as I will explore in this thesis. The situations regarding international students in Singapore and the UAE are also influenced by the wider picture of immigration: general migration themes and migration policies. Therefore, this is not only an interesting aspect of immigration in these countries, but also connected to the general trends and government enacted migration policies.

I also looked at the legal categorizations used in both countries. First, I identified three categories differentiated by general legal categorizations regarding status and length of residency in the country. These can be also applied to migration in general. They are naturalized citizens, permanent residents and temporary residents. Then I had to adapt this categorization for both countries based on their policy and their own established categories. These sub-categories were used when discussing migration trends and policy for both countries.

### **2.3.1 General Migration**

For this topic, I searched for data relating to migration trends and themes in Singapore and the UAE. The focus of this thesis is on regular migration. There are a few categories of migrants that I cover in this section including labor migrants and family migration. I discovered based on trends and policy in both countries that labor migration was the main category of migrant in both countries. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is labor migration. Sub-categories in labor migration include highly-skilled, semi-skilled, and low-skilled. I researched the trends of these

three sub-categories as well as the policy relating to each of these categories. Family migration is also present in both countries. This is when a migrant, usually a labor migrant, sponsors their spouse and children. The data included in this section is numerical data regarding historical and contemporary trends and data from reports, news articles, and other forms of written information which provide insight into the motivating factors behind immigration in these countries. I analyze this data to form an understanding of the general history and contemporary state of migration in Singapore and the UAE. In addition, this data is used to compare migration in both countries.

### **2.3.2 Migration Policies**

For this section, I collected data regarding national immigration policy enacted by the governments of Singapore and the UAE. I use data from legal documents, government released reports and press releases to collect data regarding migration policy. My discussion of this topic explores the effects which migration policy have had on the country's migration landscape. The categories from the trends section are also used in this discussion. Policies from both countries are also compared in this section. The overall goal of this section is to understand the laws surrounding immigration and how policy and migration trends inform each other.

### **2.3.3 International Students**

The importance of international students in both of these cases was clear from the beginning as they play a relatively large and unique role in these countries. I used categories identified by Knight and Lee (2014) in my discussion of the international student regimes. I found this categorization useful for aiding in the understanding of the regimes and the motivations behind the regimes. These categories determine different types of international education hubs. They include the student hub, the talent hub, and the knowledge/innovation hub. For this topic, I use many of the same types of data sources as I use for the other topics: press releases, news articles, and government released data. In addition, I have collected data released by academic institutions which is relevant to my understanding of international students in the country as a whole.

## **2.4 Reliability of Data**

Collecting reliable data is crucial for ensuring the validity of research. In this thesis, I am not collecting the data directly from the source. Rather, I am analyzing data collected by

governments and other organizations. It is crucial to ensure that the data which I am using comes from valid sources. In an effort to ensure the reliability of my data sources, I limited my data sources to well-regarded organizations and news media sources as well as data from government websites. Every effort was made to ensure the validity of my data. This was accomplished by restricting my data collection to only websites that I could trust.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I explained the methodology which I used in this research project as well as an explanation of the process which I undertook in developing this thesis. I began this chapter explaining my method selection and the reasoning behind my choice of methods. This included a description of early plans and how and why those plans were altered resulting in the plan I ultimately used. This thesis is the result of a desk study primarily due to complications in finding willing and qualified respondents. Initially, I intended on collecting my data through interviews. After it became apparent that I would be unable to find suitable informants, my plans were adjusted so that data would be collected through a desk study. Then, I explained how I chose my data sources and how I planned on using those data sources in my research. Data sources primarily included data released by the governments of Singapore and the UAE, news articles from local news outlets, and data from exports released by external entities. These sources contained data related to historical and current trends, policy changes, and information about international students and universities. The method of data collection does not allow for the inclusion of personal experiences. I would have ideally liked to present information on how this data personally affects international students as I believe that is an important component. I was able to use editorials to understand some opinions held regarding my topic. However, editorials cannot provide the personal account which interviews with international students would have. In this chapter, I also discussed the process used in analyzing my data sources. I identified the thematic categories which emerged during my data analysis and how I use those in my thesis.



### **3.0 Previous Research and Theoretical Framework**

In this chapter, I provide an overview of previous literature on this topic. I will introduce many concepts and definitions that I will use throughout the discussion of my research. This includes the necessary background information regarding migration in general and migration specifically in Singapore and the UAE. I will also provide an overview of transnational education. This chapter will provide the reader with any information necessary to understanding the discussion of my research. This includes definitions and introductions to topics which are relevant to my data set. This chapter will also introduce the theoretical frameworks which I use in presenting my research.

#### **3.1 Brief Overview of Migration**

Globalization has impacted and influenced many aspects of contemporary society. One such aspect is the movement of people across borders. Migration is a commonly discussed topic in human geography. Lee (1966) defined migration briefly and broadly as "...a permanent or semipermanent change of residence," (1966). While human movement has been a facet of life throughout history, contemporary globalizing trends have greatly influenced migration today (Castles & Wise, 2008). Some countries have been uniquely shaped by current trends of inward migration. This is relevant because this is the case in both Singapore and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Both of these countries have liberal immigration policies due to the need to import foreign labor causing both countries to have a large immigrant population in relation to their size (Kathiravelu, 2016, Yeoh, 2007). This makes both of these countries notable cases in the study of human migration and globalization. Migrants are motivated by a wide variety of drivers. While much of the immigration in these countries comes in the form of labor migrants, international students are also an important aspect of migration in these two countries.

Globalization can be witnessed in the education sector. Education has become increasingly globalized, mobilized, and transnationalized. This has dramatically changed the landscape of higher education as tertiary students and institutes have become increasingly mobilized and transnational. A rapidly increasing number of students are seeking tertiary educational opportunities beyond the borders of their country of citizenship (Prazeres et al, 2017). As a response, countries have positioned themselves to meet the demand for quality cross-border

tertiary education and have attracted internationally-mobile students from regional neighbors and around the world. Countries realized that attracting international students and promoting their country as a hub for cross-border education could provide many economic and social benefits outside of the education sector. Countries that attract international students and transnational educational institutions are often referred to as international education hubs (Knight, 2014c). This is relevant because both Singapore and the UAE are considered international education hubs due to the concentration of international students in these countries (Knight, 2011). This makes international students both an interesting and important element of the discussion of migration in both Singapore and the UAE.

Cross-border migration is a complex topic. There are many variables and many competing theories regarding this topic. There are different categories of migrants which I use in the discussion of my research. Some are highly-skilled and command a high-wage. Others are low-skilled and low-wage migrants. Both categories are present in Singapore and the UAE and have a unique place in my discussion. Migrants can also be either temporary or permanent. This distinction describes how long the migrant intends on residing in the receiving country (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). Typically, countries offer permanent residence to their highly-skilled immigrants and low-skilled migrants are only given temporary residence status. There are of course exceptions to this, notably in the case of the UAE in which all migrants are considered temporary migrants (Kathiravelu, 2016).

Many labor migrants send a portion of their income, or remittances, to their families back in their home countries. Remittances are then used to meet the family's daily expenses, repay debts, educate children, purchase a home or property, or start a small business (Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear, & Engberg-Pedersen, 2002). Many migrant workers migrate alone and remit a portion of their income. They face poor living conditions in order to live as cheaply as possible so that they can remit as much of their income as possible (Kathiravelu, 2016). This is relevant because many foreign laborers in both of these countries come alone and remit a portion of their income to their families back home. This is an important aspect of migration which I discuss in my analytical section.

## **3.2 Singapore**

Immigrants make up a relatively high percentage of Singapore's population. In 2010, it was estimated that 34.7% of Singapore's labor force was comprised of immigrants. Out of those 25.7% were non-residents, a term which, in the context, of Singapore refers to those who are neither a citizen nor permanent resident (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). Singapore has traditionally adopted a liberal immigration policy. Due to their lack of natural resources, Singapore's development and continued prosperity relies largely on importing foreign workers (Yeoh, 2007). This is relevant because it is a primary motivating factor behind Singapore's liberal immigration policy. Today, Singapore's citizen population is largely made up of the descendants of Chinese, Malay, and Indian migrants. Because of the diverse ethnic make-up of the country, English, Malay, Tamil, and Mandarin Chinese are recognized as officially languages. The country also hosts a number of recent migrants from other countries in south and southeast Asia (Yeoh, 2007).

### **3.2.1 Historical Overview**

Singapore has a long history of immigration. Singapore's liberal immigration policies date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Singapore was a British colony. Singapore was established by the British in 1819 as a trading colony. Many laborers migrated to Singapore during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of these laborers were men who came from India, China, and the Malay Archipelago. As a result of this period of liberal immigration, the population grew rapidly. This period lasted until 1928 when the Immigration Restriction Ordinance was passed. This ordinance put limits on the number of Chinese immigrants who could come each month. A few years later, in 1932 the monthly limit was applied to all immigrants with the exception of British subjects. Immigration halted completely during the Japanese occupation of Singapore. After the second World War, immigrants once again began moving to Singapore with some restrictions. Singapore remained a part of British Malaya until 1963 when the British ended control of the area. Singapore was then a part of the Federation of Malaysia until they were granted independence in 1965 (Yeoh, 2007). After independence, stricter immigration policies were established which significantly lowered the numbers of non-residents, or temporary residents, in the city-state (Yeoh and Lin, 2012). By the 1970s the non-resident population had decreased to 2.9%. (Yeoh, 2007). In the 1980s, Singapore once again began importing both

high-skilled and low-skilled migrants to meet the demand for labor in the export manufacturing industry (Yeoh & Lin, 2012; Yeoh & Lam, 2016). In the 1990s, Singapore put its focus on technology-intensive industries and developing a service-driven economy (Yeoh & Lam, 2016). The shift to a service-driven economy helped the country's development (Yeoh, 2007). More recently, the focus has been put on knowledge-intensive industries developing Singapore into a global hub that attracts talent from all over the world (Yeoh & Lam, 2016). This is relevant because this also informs Singapore's liberal migration policy.

### **3.2.2 Migration Trends**

Immigrants to Singapore are comprised of workers from all levels (Yeoh, 2007). Singapore imports low-skilled migrant workers to be employed in low-wage positions which local Singaporeans are unwilling to fill (Yeoh and Lin, 2012). Singapore also strives to recruit highly-skilled professionals to promote Singapore's position in a globalized world. Singapore has promoted an economic strategy based on attracting highly-skilled individuals, known as "foreign talent" to meet its goal of becoming a global hub for knowledge, talent, and innovation (Yeoh, 2007). This is relevant as it provides background information to both the immigration demographics but also the motivations behind the city-state's policy and goals, extending to Singapore as an international education hub.

Recently, Singapore's foreign-born population has grown substantially. Most immigrants to Singapore come from Malaysia as the connection between those two countries remains strong. As previously mentioned, in 2010, 34.7% of the population was born outside of the country. This percentage includes naturalized citizens, permanent residents, and non-residents. This has increased from 2000 when the percentage of the population born outside of the country was 28.1% (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). Additionally, the percentage of non-residents grew even more rapidly from 18.7% in 2000 to 29.2% in 2014 (Yeoh & Lam, 2016). In 2010, 14.3% of Singapore's population was composed of permanent residents with an annual growth of 8.4%. This growth was halted from 2011 onwards as a result of the general election in 2011 (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). This election is noteworthy because it influences many of the trends and policy which I will discuss in the context of Singapore.

After 2011, many migration trends and policies began to shift. Around the time of the general election of 2011, the Singaporean public expressed dissatisfaction in the government's liberal stance towards immigration. The results of the general election demonstrated that the public held serious concerns regarding the city-state's liberal immigration policy. They expressed worries of an increase in competition between Singaporeans and immigrants for employment and educational opportunities (Waring, 2014). These concerns were exacerbated by the effects of the global recession (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). The pressure the public placed on the government resulted in policy changes which influenced migration trends. These changes made it more difficult for foreigners, specifically skilled foreigners, to find employment in Singapore. It also made it more difficult for immigrants to become permanent residents or to gain citizenship (Yeoh & Lam, 2016). This is relevant because the general election in 2011 also had implications in trends and policy regarding international students.

### **3.2.3 Singapore's Immigration Policy**

Singapore's immigration policy through history has been predominantly characterized as liberal. As previously mentioned, Singapore's immigration policy, has experienced different degrees of liberalness through its history which have influenced the country's immigration trends. However, in this section, I will provide an overview of the country's recent immigration policies which will be relevant to my in-depth discussion in Chapter 5.

Singapore's immigrant population can be broadly divided into several categories. These categories correspond with the permanency of their status. The first category is residents. Residents include naturalized citizens and permanent residents. Highly-skilled workers can apply to become permanent residents. Singapore had promoted its liberal immigration policy to attract and retain foreign talent. Those granted permanent residency are permitted to stay permanently in Singapore. They are subject to mandatory military service and can be granted access to government housing programs. Permanent residents are also able to migrate with their families (Yeoh, 2007).

Singapore also extends citizenship to some of its migrants. Immigrants can become citizens if they meet the following requirements: they must be at least 21 years old, must have held permanent residency for two to six years immediately prior to applying for citizenship, have

“good character”, have the intention of remaining in Singapore permanently, and possess the financial means to financially support themselves and any dependents (Yeoh & Lin, 2012).

Another category consists of non-residents. As previously mentioned, Singapore uses the term non-resident to refer to temporary residents--those that have not been granted permanent residency or citizenship. Non-residents are typically low-skilled workers. This type of foreign guest worker is meant to fill the jobs that local Singaporeans are reluctant to take. The number of non-residents in Singapore is managed by a series of policies. These include placing a limit on the percentage of foreign workers in each sector (Yeoh, 2007). Singapore manages the non-resident population by implementing policy designed to ensure that low-skilled foreign labor only remains in the country as long as they are needed. The policy mandates that non-residents are repatriated if they become redundant or in instances of worsened economic conditions (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). A non-resident’s employment is connected to their work permit and they are not permitted to work for another employer or in another sector than the one specified in their work permit. In the event of lost employment, a non-citizen is given only seven days to leave Singapore (Yeoh & Lin, 2012).

The general election in 2011 put pressure on the Singaporean government to implement more restrictive policies. The categories of labor permits were not changed. However, the level of qualifications required for eligibility was heightened. Among these policy changes included an increase in the minimum monthly salary needed to be eligible for an employment pass. It also became more difficult for an immigrant to become a permanent resident or a naturalized citizen (Yeoh & Lam, 2016). Post-election policy changes also affected international students in Singapore. After the policy changes, international students were only given three months after graduation to find employment before they were required to return home (Yeoh & Lin, 2014). This is relevant because the policies enacted after the 2011 general election affected international students in Singapore as well as Singapore’s efforts to become an international education hub, as I will explain in the discussion of my data in Chapter 6.

### **3.2.4 International Students in Singapore**

Historically, Singapore has hosted many international students from Malaysia and Indonesia. However, in 1997, Singapore began actively recruiting international students to study in

Singapore with the end goal of transforming Singapore into an international education hub. The goal was to recruit and cater to international students at all levels from primary to tertiary students. Singapore began a campaign to promote itself as “The Global Schoolhouse”. Singapore situated itself as the best of both the East and the West by providing an Asian school system with a western-style education. To establish itself as an attractive destination for international education, Singapore played on its strengths. These included a high educational standard, instruction in English, and highlighting the country’s reputation for safety (Yeoh, 2007). By 2010, there were 91,500 students who held foreign student passes accounting for 13.1% of the students in the country (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). A detailed account of Singapore as an international student hub is provided in Chapter 6.

### **3.3 United Arab Emirates**

The UAE provides an interesting case of a country with a very liberal immigration policy. The country has a substantially higher percentage of immigrants than Singapore. The UAE’s population predominately consists of non-citizens. Approximately 88% of the country’s population are not citizens (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017b). The UAE’s government created policies designed to recruit foreign workers to meet the demand for labor, but that require immigrants to return to their home countries whenever the demand no longer exists (Abdi, 2015). This is relevant because much of my research deals with such policies and how they affect migrants in the UAE.

#### **3.3.1 Historical Overview**

The UAE was formed in 1971 out of a union of former British Trucial States: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm Al-Qaiwain. In 1966, just prior to independence, oil was discovered in the area. The economy began booming after the price of oil rose in 1973 (Ali, 2010). From the late 1950s, Sheik Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum began promoting infrastructural development (Ali, 2010). However, these projects were expensive. Before the discovery of oil, the country had not yet built up much infrastructure as these projects were too costly. After the discovery of the oil and the acquisition of funds from the oil wealth, the country was able afford to rapidly develop the infrastructure needed to modernize the country. These projects included electricity and sewer systems, piped water, and the

construction of roads and ports (Kathiravelu 2016). To complete the infrastructure projects at the desired accelerated pace, these projects required a large number of workers (Ali, 2010). The country's local labor force was unable to satisfy the labor demand (Shah, 2013). Therefore, to meet the demand caused by the rapid construction and modernization efforts, the country looked outwards. They imported large numbers of foreign workers to complete these projects (Ali, 2010). At this time, much of the local Emirati population was uneducated. This created the need to not only import unskilled laborers but also skilled workers to meet the demand for skilled labor created by the infrastructural development (Kathiravelu, 2016). In particular, many migrant workers came from India and Pakistan (Ali, 2011). Workers from South Asian countries were preferred because they were less likely to immigrate with their family (Naufal, 2011). Since that time, migrants have continued to move into the country and now they make up the majority of the country's population. Estimates suggest that there are eight million immigrants currently living in the UAE (Kanso, 2017).

### **3.3.2 UAE's Immigration Policy**

Liberal immigration policies were created to allow the importation of foreign labor but only on a temporary basis. Policies were designed to ensure that immigrants would return home whenever they were no longer needed (Abdi, 2015). Because of this, all immigrants in the UAE are only granted temporary immigration status. The UAE does not provide any path to permanent residency for immigrants nor does it provide a state-sponsored integration program (Kamrava & Barbar, 2012). Residence permits must be renewed every three years at most (Vora, 2013). A residence permit can be revoked or not renewed at any time even if the migrant has lived for many years in the UAE (Abdi, 2015). This is relevant because in my analytical section I will go into further detail regarding these points.

While there are cases of immigrants obtaining citizenship, this is extremely rare. Citizenship can only be granted by a ruler, emir, king, or in some cases, through marriage to a male Emirati citizen (Naufal, 2011). Citizenship by birth is only automatically given to children with an Emirati father (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Justice, 2008a). Even those born in the UAE to non-local parents are only considered as temporary migrants and acquire the citizenship of their fathers (Ali, 2010). Because of these immigration policies, an immigrant's legal status is never stable.



### 3.3.3 Labor Migration in the UAE

The main method of immigration in the UAE is through the *kafala*, or sponsorship, system. The *kafala* system is the method of regular migration used by most low-wage immigrants (Kathiravelu, 2016). In the *kafala* system, an immigrant is sponsored by an individual Emirati or an enterprise. The sponsor, or *kafeel*, can sponsor a migrant to work in their company, as a domestic worker, or as a business partner (Ali, 2010). Any Emirati national has the right to become a *kafeel* if they wish to sponsor a foreign worker (Abdi, 2015). In this system, a migrant's residence permit is directly tied to their *kafeel* and they are not permitted to work for any other employer (Ali, 2010). The migrant's immigration status, including the continuation of their residence permit, depends on the company or individual who acts as their *kafeel*. The *kafeel* can revoke their sponsorship of a migrant at any time, thereby revoking the residence permit (Bristol-Rhys, 2012). If either party ends the employment contract the migrant loses their labor permit and must either find a new *kafeel* or leave the UAE (Kathiravelu, 2016). This is relevant because the *kafala* system is a part of the UAE's liberal migration policy which I will discuss in my analytical chapters.

There are many studies which are critical of the *kafala* system. Mahdavi (2011) writes that the *kafala* system creates structures which can lead to vulnerability for migrants in the system. Employers are not incentivized to address migrant workers' concerns regarding fair wages and better working conditions because there is a steady stream of new migrants they can use to replace unsatisfactory employees. Migrant workers are then afraid to provoke any kind of dispute with their employers for fear of being deported. This is referred to as a "deportation regime". Deportation in this sense is used to keep migrants in line, and to keep them from organizing for better wages, working hours, and conditions. The *kafala* system has allowed for this kind of instability. If a migrant worker loses their sponsorship and are unable to find a new *kafeel*, they are forced to leave the country or to become an irregular migrant. Many opt for irregularity because it is too costly to return home and it seems like a better option than returning home without money (Mahdavi, 2011). This is relevant, in part, because such criticisms have influenced changes in the migration policy, which I will discuss in Chapter 5. Criticisms addressed in previous literature have also been directed towards the exclusionary nature of the UAE migration policy. While the policy can generally be regarded as liberal due

to the high numbers of migrants in the country, it can also be described as exclusionary due to the temporary status held by all migrants. Most countries create a path to permanent residency and even citizenship for at least some categories of migrants, such as highly-skilled migrants. This, however, is not the case in the UAE where no migrant is granted a stable migration status (Kathiravelu, 2016). This exclusionary nature influences policy but also contributes to the discussion of international students in the county. As I will discuss in this thesis, many of the tertiary students who are considered international students were born in the country but are still considered non-local because they hold temporary status (Vora, 2013). This is relevant because it is an important aspect of the study of international students in the UAE.

### **3.3.4 Family Migration and Expatriate Students in the UAE**

Many immigrants in the UAE must migrate without their families. They come to the UAE with the intention of working temporarily. During their time in the UAE they live as cheaply as possible and remit as much of their wages as they can to their families back in their home countries (Kathiravelu, 2016). Other migrants stay long-term, despite being classified as temporary migrants. Those who meet the necessary requirements outlined in the UAE's family sponsorship policies sponsor their spouses and children so they can be reunited in the UAE. This can only be achieved by those who make enough money (Ali, 2010). It is more difficult for women to sponsor their husbands and children. She must work in certain high-end professions to be eligible (Vora, 2013).

Understanding family sponsorship, specifically sponsorship of the children of immigrants, is important for understanding the motivations behind a large portion of international students in the country. Children who are sponsored by a parent are considered to be part of the "1.5 generation." These are children who were born in the UAE to immigrant parents or who immigrated to the UAE at a young age. For them, the UAE is their home. In some cases, they have never lived anywhere else. Yet, they are still legally considered to be temporary residents (Abdi, 2015). If, or when, their parent becomes unable to sponsor them, they lose their residence permit. Expatriate children would then be forced to move to their parent's home country, a country they may have never lived in or even been to, unless they are able to find a sponsor.

Daughters who are sponsored by their fathers have greater flexibility and security regarding their residence permit sponsorship. An unmarried daughter is able to be sponsored by her father as long as he remains eligible to sponsor family members. If her father loses his job or no longer meets the requirements, she would lose her residence through sponsorship and would need to find her own sponsorship to legally stay in the UAE. If they marry, they can no longer be sponsored by their father. The sponsorship would transfer to her husband. On the other hand, sons with a residence permit obtained through family sponsorship have less flexibility and more instability. They cannot be sponsored by a parent after they turn 18. However, there is an exception. Sons can remain on a family sponsored visa if they are currently studying at a university. Upon completion of universities studies, they must find their own *kafeel* to sponsor them or return to their country of citizenship (Vora, 2013).

This presents an important aspect of international student education in the UAE, which I will cover in detail in Chapter 6. Attending university in the UAE can defer the termination of a family sponsorship residence permit for a few years. Therefore, this can be used as a strategy to help expatriate children remain in the UAE. Even though they were raised or even born in the country, they are still considered to be foreign students. This is relevant in my discussion of international student migration in the UAE. While there are international students in the UAE who came to the country specifically to study, expatriate children can also use tertiary studies to prolong the validity of their family sponsorship visa (Vora, 2013). International branch campuses in the UAE provide a means for a university education for expatriate students who want to remain in the UAE but are unable to study in the federal universities (Mahani & Molki, 2011).

### **3.3.5 Free Zones**

An important aspect of both immigration and transnational education in the UAE are free zones. Free zones are areas established by the governments throughout each of the emirates. Within these areas, enterprises and institutions can operate tax-free without ownership restrictions (Ali, 2010). This is important for my discussion of international student education in the UAE because many of the universities and institutions which serve expatriate and international students are based in free zones.

### **3.4 International Student Mobility**

The globalization of education has manifested itself in a variety of ways. One manifestation of globalization in the education sector is international student mobility. International student mobility broadly refers to the mobilization of a student as they participate in an educational program outside of their home country (Collins, Sidhu, Lewis, & Yeoh, 2014). This is relevant because an understanding of international student mobility is important for understanding international student regimes in Singapore and the UAE.

#### **3.4.1 Defining International Students**

It is important to determine an appropriate definition of international students to use throughout my discussion. However, finding an adequate definition to encapsulate who is and who is not an international student can be a very difficult task. There are many unexpected variables due to the diverse experiences and circumstances of internationally-mobile students. It is difficult to find a definition which describes every context. Researchers and organizations have attempted to create definitions which describe as many internationally-mobile students as possible. Suzanne Beech provides a broad definition of international students as, "...someone who studies for either part or all of their education outside of their country of residence." But recognized that, "...boundaries between international students and other categories of migrants are becoming increasingly blurred." (2017).

Many definitions explicitly include the act of crossing a border in their definition of international students. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) does this in their definition by defining international students broadly and simply as, "...those who have crossed a national border and moved to another country with the objective to study," (UIS, 2014). Earlier in this section, I mentioned that a comprehensive definition that would be applicable to all types of international student is difficult to create. One such type of international student which is excluded in a definition specifying the movement across borders, is expatriate children in the UAE. These students may have spent a large portion of their lives in the UAE or even have been born there. Despite this, they are not considered to be locals. These children of expatriates lack permanent residence status in the UAE despite being born or growing up in the country (Knight & Lee, 2014). They are excluded from the universities which provide education for

local students because they are considered non-locals (Mahani & Molki, 2011). This type of student would not be crossing a national border for the express purpose of studying but is nevertheless considered to be an international student by the government of the UAE. This is relevant because much of my research regarding the international student regime in the UAE deals with expatriate students as they make up a significant portion of the international student population.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has attempted to deal with this predicament by differentiating between distinctive groups of internationally-mobile students. They categorize international students as "...those who left their country of origin and moved to another country for the purpose of study." The country of origin in this definition is not the country of citizenship but instead either the country of permanent or usual residence or the country of prior education (OECD, 2017). This definition as well as the UIS definition still include a cross-border mobility aspect. As I will discuss particularly in the case of the UAE, not all of those considered to be international students crossed a border to undertake their education. Therefore, this definition still does not adequately describe expatriate students such as those in the UAE. Since my thesis includes the UAE, it is important to establish a definition which includes expatriate children who are studying in the UAE. The OECD does include expatriate students in its definition of foreign students. The OECD defines foreign students as, "...those who are not citizens of the country in which they are enrolled..." This definition acknowledges that this category of students "...may be long-term residents or even be born in the 'host' country." (OECD, 2017). This definition includes students who are children of foreign guest workers. In some cases, such as the in the UAE, children of expatriates or foreign guest workers are still considered to be non-local students even if they have spent many years or were even born in the country where they are enrolled as a student (Knight & Lee, 2014).

For the purposes of this thesis, international students will be broadly defined as a student who is enrolled at an educational facility in a country where they are neither a citizen nor permanent resident. The phrase, international student will act as an all-encompassing term relating to all types of internationally-mobile or foreign student, unless otherwise noted. The term expatriate student will be used when specifically referring to students who are the children of immigrants who are still considered to be non-local students even if they have lived in the country as the children of expatriates for many years (Knight & Lee, 2014). This distinction will be especially

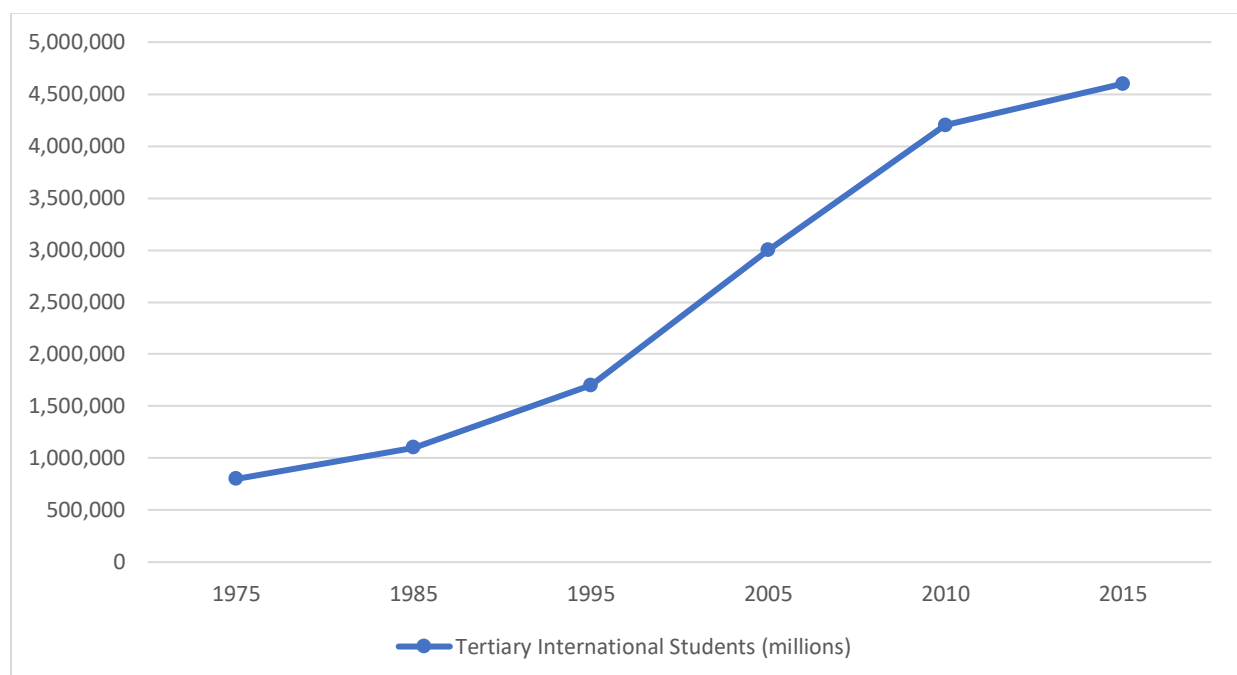
useful in my discussion of UAE expatriate students in Chapter 6. This thesis excludes exchange students in its discussion of international students in Singapore and the UAE.

### 3.4.2 Growth of International Student Mobility

International student mobility has increased rapidly over the last few decades. In 1975 there were approximately 800,000 international students globally. From the mid 1990s until 2010, international students enrolled in tertiary education grew especially rapidly. Growth slowed down from early 2010 onward. Although growth had slowed, that number continued to rise and grew to 4.6 million in 2015 (OECD, 2017). Some estimates suggest that despite this, the overall number of internationally-mobile students will increase to almost 8 million by 2025 (Knight, 2011).

As more students are interested in attending university abroad, countries are competing to attract internationally-mobile students. This is relevant because some countries have seen this as an opportunity and have risen up to meet this demand for foreign education. They have actively pursued the recruitment of internationally-mobile students to move to their country to study. They do this in the hope of reaping the benefits which international students can bring (Knight 2014b).

**Figure 2: Worldwide international student mobility growth**



Note: Figure 2 adapted from OECD Data. Retrieved from: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2017\\_eag-2017-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2017_eag-2017-en)

### **3.5 International Education Hubs**

A crucial aspect of international student mobility is the host country, also referred to as the receiving country. These countries are the destinations for internationally-mobile students. As previously mentioned, international student mobility is increasing, and some expect the number of internationally-mobile students to reach almost eight million by 2025 (Knight, 2011). Some countries have seen the rise in the demand for transnational education as an opportunity. They have sought economic and global benefits by attracting international students and transnational education providers. These motivations include the desire to create a skilled workforce and develop the country into a knowledge- and innovation-based economy (Knight, 2014a). I will discuss these in further detail later in this section.

One visible effect of globalization can be seen in the landscape of transnational or cross-border education. In her research, Jane Knight (2014c) identifies three generations of cross-border education. The first is the mobility of people and students. This is basic international student mobility. She describes this generation as the movement of students or faculty to another country for academic purposes. This includes both to receive an education and for research. The second generation she identifies is the mobility of education providers. This generation encapsulates cross-border programs (2014c). Higher education institutions are interested in developing an international presence. They do this through developing transnational programs, partnerships, and student exchange opportunities. They also establish international branch campuses (Mahani & Molki, 2011). An international branch campus is an educational institution which provides educational services at a physical location in a country other than the one in which they are primarily located (Wilkins, 2011). This is relevant because international branch campuses play an important part in international student education in both Singapore and the UAE. Countries wishing to attract international students often find it attractive to host branch campuses. They are able to gain benefits from having these universities established in their country without investing money to develop their own institutions (Knight 2014c). The third generation of cross-border education, as identified by Knight, is international education hubs. This incorporates the two previous generations:

mobility of people and mobility of providers. However, it additionally implies a strategic effort of using these actors in the development and promotion of a country (2014c). Understanding these three generations aids in understanding the international student regimes in Singapore and the UAE.

An understanding of international education hubs is particularly important in understanding the international student regimes in Singapore and the UAE as both these countries have been identified as such hubs. An international education hub is defined as "...a planned effort to build a critical mass of local and international actors strategically engaged in crossborder education, training, knowledge production and innovation initiatives" (Knight, 2011). In addition to the two countries from my research, there are other countries which are considered to be international education hubs. These include Hong Kong, Malaysia, Qatar, and Botswana. Other countries have also been identified as emerging hubs. These include Bahrain, Mauritius, South Korea, and Sri Lanka (Knight, 2014c).

These hubs all have their own motivations for and strategies behind becoming an international education hub. Therefore, different types of hubs have emerged. Knight and Lee identify three types of education hubs in their research. These types are determined by the drivers, motivations, reasoning, and circumstances behind the country seeking to establish itself, or having been established, as an international education hub (2014). Understanding these types of hubs is relevant to my research because it aids in understanding the landscape of transnational education in Singapore and the UAE.

The first type is the most common type: the student hub. This type of education hub offers educational opportunities for students. These students can include domestic, foreign, and expatriate students. The goal of this type of hub is to benefit from educating students, specifically through the recruitment of international students. These benefits include increased educational opportunities and access for local students, modernizing the education system, improving the country's reputation for education, and generating revenue from the international students they recruit. To achieve their vision, a student hub focuses on developing a critical mass of education providers and opportunities which appeal to internationally-mobile students. The strategy often involves attracting institutions to establish international branch campuses in their country. Successfully attracting an institution with a good reputation can boost the hubs global position and competitiveness. Student hubs seek to educate students



before they return to their home countries. They are not incentivized to stay beyond the completion of their education as their utility in the hub's strategy only extends to their education (Knight & Lee 2014).

The second type mentioned by Knight & Lee is the talent hub. This type of hub is similar to the first. The talent hub is involved in educating students. However, what distinguishes this type of hub from the one previously mentioned is the end goal. Talent hubs train students for the purpose of developing a skilled workforce. The skilled workforce is then used to promote the country's global positioning and develop a service- or knowledge-based economy. Attracting prominent institutions to develop branch campuses is also a strategy used by this type of hub. Talent hubs are interested in not only developing their workforce from their own local population but by attracting talent from other countries. A liberalized immigration policy is often a characteristic of this type of hub. This facilitates the immigration of the type of global talent which the country seeks to attract. Another distinction between a talent hub and a student hub is that talent hubs hope to retain the students after they complete their education. They want to incorporate these students into the workforce so that the country can obtain further benefits from them. The talent hub provides incentives to international students to encourage them to stay and contribute to the country's economy as skilled professionals upon the completion of their education (2014).

The third and final type of hub is the knowledge/innovation hub. This type of hub seeks to not only impart knowledge to students but to also contribute to knowledge production and innovation. These hubs often focus on research relating to STEM fields: science, technology, engineering, and math. It combines higher education with research and development, science, and technology firms. This type of hub also promotes corporate research. Attracting foreign talent to contribute to knowledge production is one of the goals of this type of hub. Knowledge/innovation hubs are motivated by the goal of increasing their position in the global knowledge economy through the production of knowledge. A transnationalized education system in this type of hub contributes to the development of a research culture (Knight & Lee, 2014).

This description of these three types of international student hubs is relevant to my research because I use this analytical framework in my discussion in Chapter 6. In this chapter, I will evaluate the international student regimes of Singapore and the UAE and explore which of the

aforementioned categories are applicable. I use analytical analysis of the data to determine in which category, or categories, each of these countries can be placed and which characteristics each hub shares with these categories. Understanding the categories provides scope into the wider vision and motivations exhibited by each country, as I demonstrate in my analytical section.

### **3.6 Migration Theory**

In this section, I will provide an overview of the theories of migration which I use in analyzing my data. Researchers implement the use of theories for a number of reasons; notably theories are used to explain a phenomenon. This section will introduce these theories and provide the necessary background information related to these theories. Theories are not infallible and have inherent weaknesses. Therefore, they can never provide a complete interpretation of data. Because of this, I will also examine the weaknesses inherent in each theory. While these theories can also be applied to migration and international student mobility in Singapore and the UAE, there are some challenges. For example, many migration theories are developed to explain migration to western destinations. Much of the theoretical work explaining international student mobility is focused on western countries such as the US and UK as international education destinations. In addition to introducing these theories, I will discuss how existing research has used these theories in the discussion of international students.

The theory which I use most in my discussion is the push-pull theory of migration. This theory was first introduced by Lee who proposed that there were positive and negative factors at both the origin country and the destination country. He used this model to explain the factors which influence human migration and the choice to migrate and where to migrate (1966). This dichotomy posits that there are “push factors” which are factors originating in a source country which cause an individual to choose to migrate, and “pull factors” which are factors within a host country which make the country an attractive destination to migrants (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors are typically related to negative economic, social, and political circumstances in source countries and pull factors are positive economic, social, and political circumstances. Differences between these negative and positive factors in countries influence the movement of people from sending to receiving countries. (Schoorl et al, 2000). While my research does not focus on push factors from source countries, this framework, and specifically

the “push” aspect, can be applied to international students currently in Singapore and the UAE. After these students finish their studies, they must decide whether they will remain in the host country, return to their home country, or relocate to a third country. “Push factors” can also refer to the forces which make a migrant decide to leave the host country. This can also influence the choice made by migrants in other categories of whether to stay in the host country or go elsewhere. My discussion will largely include the use of “pull factors”. In particular, these include the reputation of each country, location, political stability, and the perception of safety. It is important to consider other influencing factors which cannot be so neatly placed into either category. For example. The liberal migration policies in these countries including the relative ease of migration can mean that migrants choose these destinations because there are no other viable alternatives. The issue is more complicated. The “pull factors” for these countries may necessarily be as compelling as others, yet these liberal policies facilitate more migration.

One criticism of the push-pull model is that it is only a list of factors which can influence people’s choices, but it does not fully explain human movement. For example, it does not explain why only some people migrate when experiencing “push” factors. Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long proposed a framework which utilizes factors and drivers. Factors are the conditions which contribute to migration, but drivers are the factors and conditions which influence an individual’s choices and ability to migrate or not. For example, precipitating factors are those which cause the individuals to decide whether to move or stay and mediating factors facilitate the movement. They also identify dimensions which relate to drivers. One of these is locality. An aspect of this dimension is immigration policies at the destination countries (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018). This suggests that, countries such as Singapore and the UAE with liberal immigration policies better facilitate immigration which drives migrants into the country. Another dimension identified is duration. This relates to the length of stay in the destination country (Van Hear, Bakewell, & Long, 2018). For example, many migrants move temporarily with the intent to return home and others intend to move permanently. This is apparent in both of the cases I discuss in this thesis. Migrants in Singapore may be temporary or may become permanent residents or citizens. Migrants in the UAE are all legally temporary residents but many desire to stay long-term and find strategies which they can use to do so.

Many researchers have applied the push-pull model to explain international student mobility. It is the most common theoretical framework used in explaining international student mobility

(Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman, 2012). Much of the previous literature applying this model to international student mobility focuses on traditional flows in which students from eastern countries are drawn to western countries which are considered traditional destination countries (Kondakci, Bedenlier, Zawacki-Richter, 2017). Among these are countries such as the US and UK. Although the push-pull model has traditionally been used to analyze the motivations behind the traditional east-to-west flow of international student mobility, it has also been applied to other flows of international student mobility (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman, 2012).

Using the terminology of the push-pull model, this means that “push” factors determine an international student’s choice to leave their country to study elsewhere and the decision regarding host country is made at a later point. Many “push” factors are identified in existing literature. Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman cited low quality education, limited study places at institutions, lack of study programs in certain fields and political and economic problems in an individual’s home country, as well as a preference for a foreign education by employers as the most discussed “push” factors (2012).

Mazzarol and Soutar found that internationally-mobilized students first determine that they will study outside of their country and then they make a decision as to in which country they will study (2002). This means that the individual accesses “push” factors in their home country to determine if they will study abroad. Once the decision to study abroad is made, the individual evaluates “pull” factors in potential destinations countries when choosing a host country (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). In relation to international student migration, “push factors” may include a lack of quality education and economic and political problems in the source country. “Pull factors” may include the reputation of the higher education system or specific universities in the destination country, instruction conducted in English, safety, and the opportunity to experience a new culture or study in a multicultural setting (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, and Huisman, 2012). “Pull” factors have a greater influence on an individual student’s choice than “push” factors. They also play an important role in the competition for internationally-mobile students. “Pull” factors in a specific destination country can affect that country’s competitiveness as they can influence an individual student’s decision to study in one country rather than another (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). This is relevant because countries which actively recruit internationally-mobile students promote their “pull” factors when competing with each other. Researchers have identified several generic “pull” factors which

attract internationally-mobile students to international student host countries. Commonly cited “pull” factors include the quality and reputation of higher education in the host country, the prospect of improved employment opportunities, the opportunity to improve English-language skills, and the chance to experience a different culture (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). In addition, students might be attracted by the prospect of studying in a multicultural setting or a setting with a state-of-the-art research capacity (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). The reputation of an individual institution can also be considered a “pull” factor” (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). However, internationally-mobile students typically choose a host country before they decide which institution they will attend (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). Because of this, we can infer that “pull” factors for the reputation of the country as a whole is more important than the appeal of a particular educational institution in determining a host country.

While this model can be useful, it does have some limitations. Migration is a complex phenomenon (Wu & Wilkes 2017). The push-pull theory provides a relatively clear and simple understanding of a complicated topic. However, it can be limited by its simplicity. One criticism of the push-pull model is that it does not explain why some regions send migrants and other do not and why only some people in sending regions migrate (Schoorl et al, 2000). There are many other factors which cannot be adequately explained by this model. For example, there are personal characteristics and preferences held by an individual which are not accounted for in the push-pull model. These include personal feelings, interests, and personality traits and personal perception regarding safety and religion. It also does not account for other external influences which have an impact on the individual’s decision. These include guidance and recommendation from family members, friends, teachers, mentors, and agents (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). This model fails to explain how an individual student will respond to the “push” and “pull” factors because of their individual personal characteristics and preferences (Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2012). Another limitation is that these factors cannot be universally applied across different contexts. A factor that is deemed important in one country may be unimportant when applied in another country (Wu & Wilkes, 2017). This provides a challenge in using this model in the analysis of my data to explain migration in Singapore and the UAE. The push-pull model has mostly been applied in explaining migration and international student mobility in traditional destination countries in the west. However, there are some aspects of this model that aid in understanding which I will employ in my discussion. Newly emerged destination countries for internationally-mobile

students may not have the same “pull” factors as the traditional destination countries. However, they may have others, such as geographic proximity and cultural and religious similarities.

Another theory used to explain migration and international student mobility is world-systems theory. World-systems theory divides the world into three categories: core, periphery, and semi-periphery. Peripheral economies are considered labor-intensive and low-wage. The economies of core countries are considered to be capital-intensive, high-wage, and based in technology, knowledge, and innovation. A country’s economic and political developmental status are linked to the country’s global positioning. World-systems theory posits that this distinction contributes to inequality. This also influences the flow of goods, information, and people between core and periphery countries as these entities tend to flow towards core, or developed, countries which reinforces the country’s dominance (Kondakci, Bedenlier, Zawacki-Richter, 2017).

Oliver Bakewell (2014) proposed taking migration systems theory and updating it to deal with critiques. His adaptation defines a migration system as a set of interacting elements and the dynamics which control these elements, including migration flows. These include flows of people, ideas, and institutions (Bakewell, 2014). This theory is used to supplement the application of the push-pull theory of migration and is only used when it is relevant.

### **3.7 Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reviewed the existing literature which is relevant to my discussion. I reviewed the existing research regarding Singapore and the UAE including a brief historical overview, brief insight into trends and policy, and international students in each country. Both Singapore and the UAE have liberal migration policies which have facilitated the migration of many migrants. The liberal immigration policies in both countries which have influenced the trends and policy present in both general and international student migration. Although these countries have liberal immigration policies, there is a paradoxical nature in these cases. This is particularly true with the case of the UAE. Despite the large percentage of immigrants, permanent status is non-existent, and all immigration is temporary. Singapore also confines low-skilled migrants to temporary status. I have also provided the reader with other necessary background knowledge related to aspects of migration in general. This has included defining

some key terms and introducing relevant concepts and topics. These included international education hubs and international branch campuses. I also introduce the categories employed by the governments of each country. For example, Singapore divides its population into two main categories: residents and non-residents. An important categorization relates to the length of stay in the country: temporary versus permanent residence. These categories are important for understanding both trends and policy. I have also introduced some of the issues and challenges in these countries which have provoked policy changes. In Singapore, public discontent has been the primary driver behind the tightening of migration policy. In the UAE, criticisms of the *kafala* system has influences policy changes. In this chapter, I have also introduced frameworks and theories which I use in the analysis of my data. These include the push-pull model and world systems theory, and Bakewell's relaunching migration systems theory. Knight and Lee's framework categorizing international education hubs will be applied to the understanding of motivations of these countries and international education hubs. These theories will aid in the understanding of my data and will help explain motivations of migrants in both countries. Using the push-pull model in combination with the updated framework developed to address the critiques of the shortcomings of the model will be applied in analytical chapters to help the reader better understand motivations behind migration in relation to Singapore and the UAE.





## **4.0 Migration Trends in Singapore and the UAE**

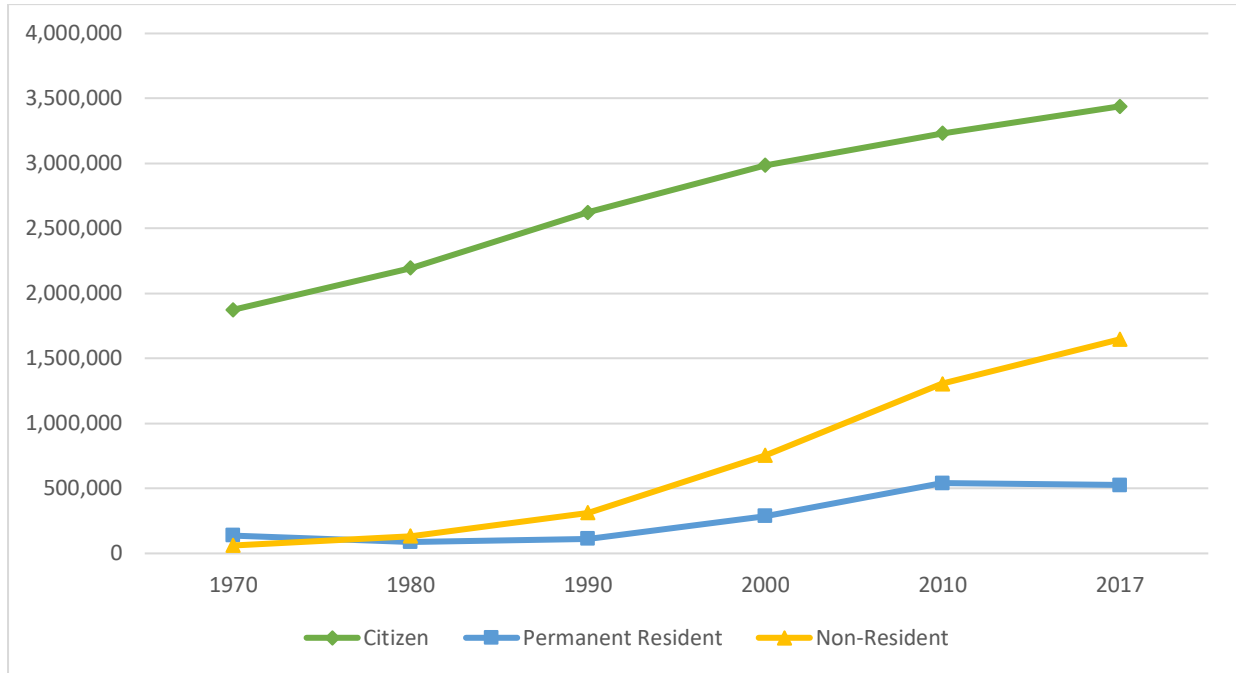
In this chapter, I will analyze and share the information I collected regarding migration trends in Singapore and the UAE. First, I will present information from reports and studies regarding Singapore and the UAE individually. These sources include general demographic data including the total number of immigrants in both countries and the number belonging to certain categories of migrants. These categories include the distribution of migrants in the official legal categories determined by the respective governments, countries of origin, and skill level. The categories included in each section are partially determined by the type of data available and what I deemed to be the most important. I also discuss the reasons why immigrants come to both of these countries. I also provide a historical scope where I demonstrate how these migration trends have shifted over time. After looking at each case individually, I will compare and contrast immigration trends in these countries. This thesis focuses on regular migration. Therefore, numbers used in this section are official numbers and do not include irregular migrants.

### **4.1 Migration Trends in Singapore**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Singapore has had a relatively liberal immigration policy throughout its history. This continues today. Because of this, Singapore has a notable immigrant population. According to the UN Population Division from 2017, there are 2,623,404 immigrants in Singapore, or about 46.74% of the total population (United Nations Population Division, 2017). This includes immigrants who have become citizens, permanent residents, and non-residents. The population of Singapore is usually divided by the government into two broad categories: residents and non-residents. The resident category contains two sub-categories: citizens and permanent residents. The Singaporean government uses the term non-residents to refer to the other immigrants who live, work, and study in Singapore who are neither citizens nor permanent residents (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2017). The category citizen contains two sub-categories: Singaporean citizens from birth and naturalized citizens. Immigrants can apply to become permanent residents. As mentioned in the previous chapter, permanent residents have the right to live permanently in Singapore (Yeoh, 2007). However, not all immigrants can become permanent residents because they do not meet the necessary qualifications (Becoming a Permanent Resident, 2018). This is elaborated upon in

the next chapter. I prefer to divide the population into three categories: citizens, permanent residents, and non-residents for the purposes of this thesis. The following figure demonstrates the growth trends of these three categories I have identified from the year 1970 to 2017.

**Figure 3: Singapore population, 1970-2017, by three categories of the population**



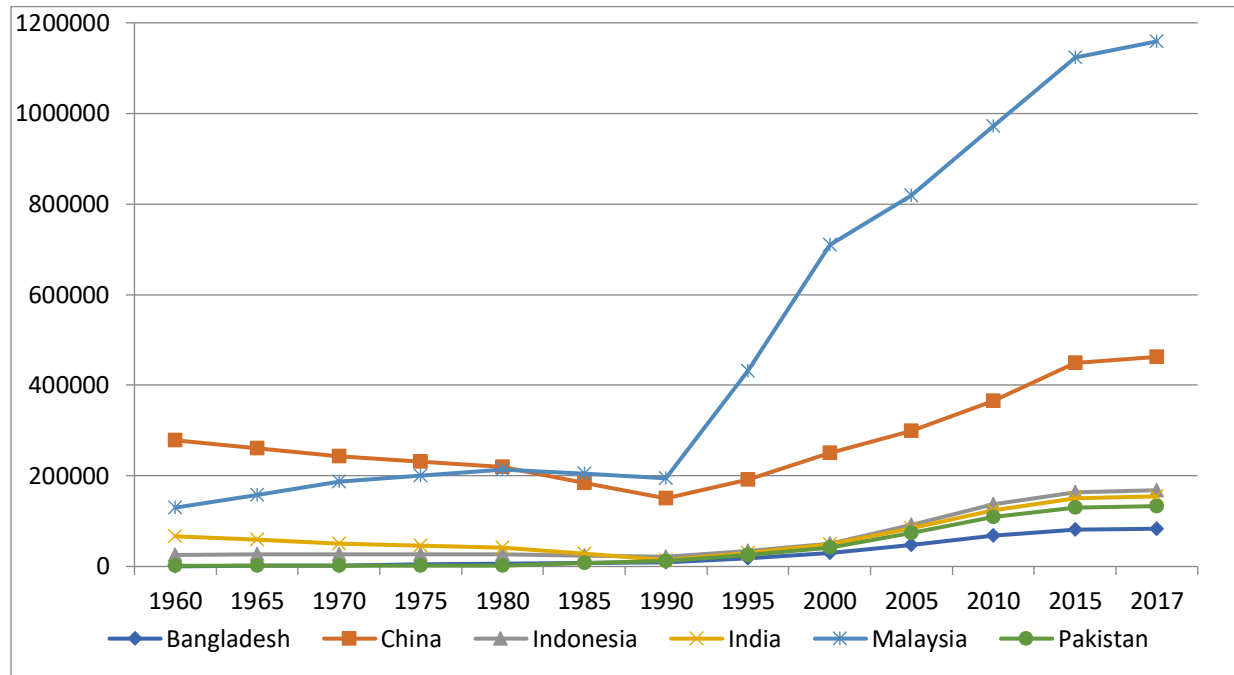
Note: Figure 3 created using data adapted from Population Trends 2017 the Department of Statistics Singapore (<https://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/population-and-population-structure/population-trends>)

In June 2017, the population was approximately 5,612,300. Of this 61.28%, or 3,439,200, are citizens, 9.38%, or 526,600, are permanent residents, 29.34%, or 1,646,500, are non-residents (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2017). Out of the non-resident population, 42% are work-permit holders, 12% have an employment pass, 14% are domestic workers, 11% are S-Pass holders, 17% are dependents who are sponsored by a qualified individual, and 4% are students (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017).

Migrants come to Singapore from regional countries and other countries throughout the world. Most of the citizens in Singapore are ethnically Chinese, Indian, or Malay (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017). This demonstrates the history of immigration in Singapore which has historically attracted migrant workers from China, India, and the Malay Archipelago. The descendants of these migrants make up the citizen population in Singapore (Yeoh, 2007).

Migrants still come from these countries as well as others as demonstrated in figure four. A group which stands out in this figure is migrants from Malaysia. They make up 44.18% of immigrants in Singapore, or 1,158,890 (United Nations Population Division, 2017). This is approximately 20.65% of the total population of Singapore. This is a very significant percentage which demonstrates the connections between Singapore and Malaysia.

**Figure 4: Migrant stocks Singapore, 1960-2017, from six largest senders 2017**



Note: Figure 4 is based on data taken from UN population division, and WB see : <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.sh> [tml](#) This figure was created by prof. Jakobsen and Valenta and used with permission of my supervisor.

Many migrants to Singapore are labor migrants. Job opportunities is a significant “pull factor” which attracts migrants to Singapore. This includes labor migrants at all skill levels. In December 2017, foreign workers made up 37.2% of the labor force in Singapore, or approximately 1,368,000 workers. Foreign workers are present in many sectors including manufacturing, construction, and in the service industry (Singapore Ministry of Manpower, 2018). Foreign workers can also be divided into the categories skilled, semi-skilled, and low-skilled. Low-skilled workers typically work for low wages and take the jobs which Singaporeans do not want to take. Skilled workers hold employment passes which allow them to apply for permanent residence (Yeoh and Lin, 2012). Low-skilled and semi-skilled workers

make up approximately 70.97% of the work force in Singapore. Skilled workers make up 26.86%. The other 2.17% is made up of other foreign workers (Han, 2018). Pay for lower-skilled workers is substantially lower than for skilled workers. A migrant laborer from India or Bangladesh can expect to earn a starting monthly salary of US\$400 - \$465 a month while the average monthly salary in Singapore is US\$3077 (Han, 2018).

Singapore provides an interesting case of migration partially because its history of immigration. Singapore's liberal migration policy has attracted many people to live and work both temporarily and permanently in the country. The prospect of employment is a significant "pull" factor for migrants coming to Singapore. The country continues to attract migrants from all skill levels. In the next chapter, I will discuss migration policy in Singapore. These trends play an important role in the discussion of policy as one is often influenced by the other.

## **4.2 Migration Trends in United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates also has a very liberal immigration policy. In 2017, the United Nations Population Division published that there were 8,312,524 immigrants in the UAE (United Nations Population Division, 2017). The UN also estimates that the total population is 9,400,145 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017b). The explosive population growth throughout the history of the UAE has been predominately driven by rapid immigration and the growth of the non-national population. Figure 5 demonstrates this growth in relation to the population growth of the national population. The rate of growth of these two groups has diverged to the point where non-nationals make up over 88% of the population of the UAE (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017b). It is important to remember from the previous chapter that children born to immigrants are not given Emirati citizenship (Ali, 2010). Therefore, this non-national population growth demonstrated in Figure 5 does not just represent the rate of immigration but also the births of the children of expatriates.

**Figure 5: UAE national and non-national population growth (1975-2010)**

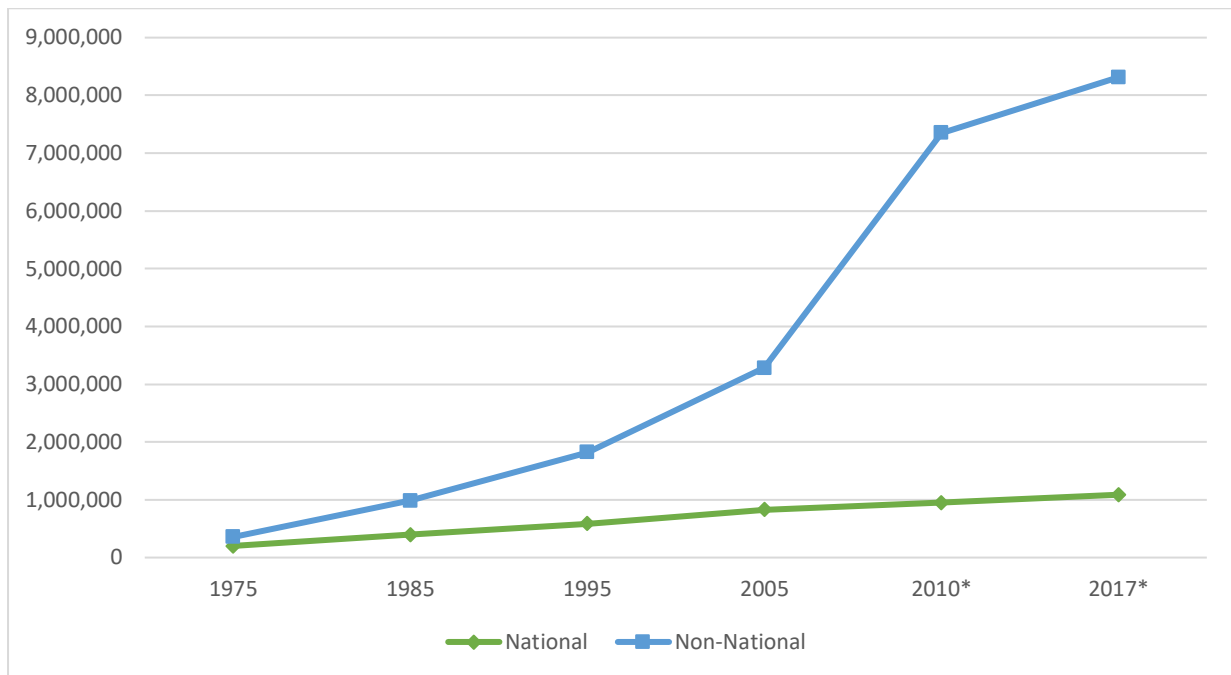
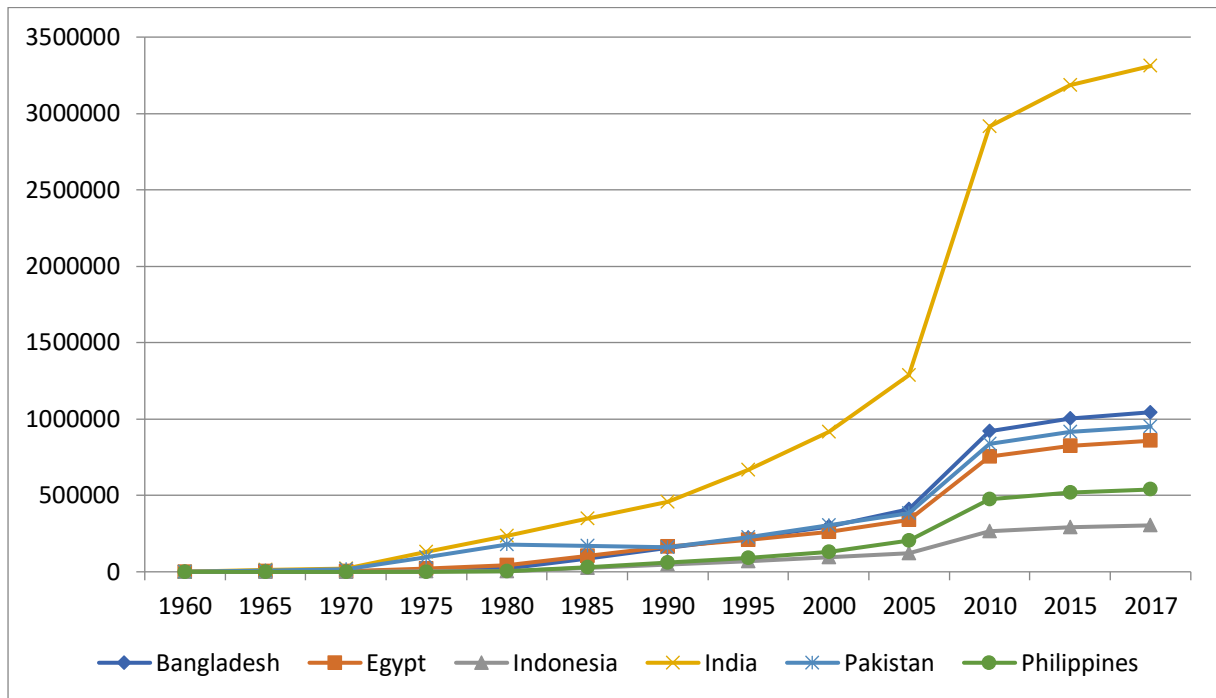


Figure 5 was created from census data provided by the UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority and government.ae. (<http://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Pages/Statistics/Statistics-by-Subject.aspx>, <https://www.government.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity/population-and-demographic-mix>, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtml>). \*Data is based on estimates, no official census data for these years.

Immigrants to the UAE come from countries in the region and from other countries around the world. Notably, the UAE hosts many migrants from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines as demonstrated in Figure 6. In fact, migrants from these countries make up 84.28% of the total migrant stock in the UAE. The number of Indian immigrants living in the UAE is particularly noteworthy as there were 3,310,419 as of 2017, or almost 40% migrants in the country (United Nations Population Division, 2017). This figure shows that the flow of migrants from India to the UAE have existed throughout the UAE's history.

**Figure 6: Migrant stock in United Arab Emirates for six largest sending countries (in 2017), 1960-2017**



Note: Figure 6 was created by professors Jakobsen and Valenta (Valenta et al. forthcoming) and used with permission from my supervisor, Professor Valenta.

Many of the labor migrants who come to the UAE are male. A large portion the non-national population, and by extension the total population of the UAE is male. In 2016, 69% of population of the UAE was male and the remaining 31% were female (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2016). The workforce is even more male dominated. According to the Ministry for Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE) women only account for approximately 10% of the workforce in the private sector (MOHRE, 2017).

The predominant motivation to immigrate to the UAE is to work and the prospect of work is a major “pull” factor. As previously mentioned, the UAE has historically and continues to rely on foreign labor (Ali, 2010). A publication from 2012 stated that foreign workers accounted for 96% of the total UAE’s workforce. Foreign workers nearly comprise the entirety of the private sector, or 99.5%. Emiratis occupy more jobs in the public sector. However, foreign labor still comprises around 40% of the workforce in the public sector (“Fact Sheet,” n.d.). MOHRE states that out of the workers registered with them in the private sector, which is overwhelmingly expatriate, 48.03% of the workforce consists of low-skilled workers, 29.99%

are skilled workers, 9.17% are professionals, 3.37% technical, and 9.45% specialist (MOHRE, 2017).

The prospect of higher wages is a “pull” factor which attracts many labor migrants. Migrants hope to make more money than they do in their home countries. As mentioned in the previous chapter, labor migrants in the UAE often remit a portion or the bulk of their income to their families in their home countries (Kathiravelu, 2016). From January 2017 to September 2017, foreign workers in the UAE remitted Dh 121.1 billion (almost US\$33 billion). Of the money remitted, India received 12.8%, Pakistan 8.7%, and the Philippines 6.7% (Maceda, 2017). The amount sent in remittances during these 9 months in 2017 is substantially higher than the amount sent in 2014 when almost US\$20 billion was remitted by foreign workers in the UAE in the course of that year (World Bank, 2017). This rapid increase is credited to the growth in the UAE economy and strength of the UAE Dirham, which is connected to the US dollar, against depreciating Asian currencies (Maceda, 2017).

As previously mentioned, the children of immigrants are also considered to be immigrants even if they were born in the UAE (Ali, 2010). These individuals also contribute to the number of non-nationals living in the UAE. Expatriate children born in the UAE, also called the “1.5 generation” often stay as long as they can in the UAE despite the lack of a stable immigrant status because the UAE is their home. In some cases, it is the only home they have ever known, (Vora, 2013). I could not find a definitive source stating how many non-nationals currently living in the UAE were born in the country. However, it can be inferred that there are many non-nationals in this category. In 2015, 62,534 of the children born in the UAE were born to non-nationals (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2015). Some of these may eventually move to their parents’ home countries or other countries. Still others will try to stay in the UAE throughout the course of their lives.

The UAE continues to be an attractive destination for migrant workers who seek improved job prospects (Maceda, 2017). The UAE provides an interesting case of migration due to the fact that migrants make up the overwhelming majority of the population and the workforce as discussed in this section. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on the policy and give context to how trends have been affected by policy decisions.

### 4.3 Comparative Analysis of Migration Trends

While, there are some differences in these cases, there are also many similarities in the immigration trends which exist in Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. For example, these two countries are relatively young. They have also both placed great importance on recruiting foreign labor and are attractive destinations for migrants. I identified job opportunities as a “pull” factor for both of these countries. The governments have also developed liberal immigration policies which allow large numbers of migrants to live and work in the country (Kathiravelu, 2016; Yeoh & Lam, 2012). These countries both attract migrants from all over the world. They also are destinations for migrants from some of the same source countries. For example, Bangladesh, Indonesia, India, and Pakistan are top source countries for both Singapore and the UAE (United Nations Population Division, 2017). Both countries also have a strong migration connection with another country which holds a large share of the migrant stock. For Singapore this country is Malaysia and for the UAE this country is India (United Nations Population Division, 2017). These trends in both countries are also influenced by local workers’ reluctance to take certain jobs, in particular, low-skilled and low-wage jobs (Kathiravelu, 2016; Yeoh, 2007).

One obvious difference is the percentage of the population which is a temporary resident or non-citizen in each country. While both countries have relatively high percentages of non-citizens due to their liberal immigration policies, the UAE’s percentage is considerably higher. As previously mentioned, in the UAE, a staggering 88% of the population is made up of non-citizens (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017b). While in Singapore, 38.72% of the population is non-citizen (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2017). These two numbers alone do not tell the whole story. The comparison is limited because the two countries use different measures and definitions and have different policies. For example, the percentages cannot account for the fact that Singapore allows immigrants to become citizens while the UAE does not even allow those born in the UAE to foreign parents to obtain citizenship (Ali, 2010). If accounting for immigrants who have become citizens as well, 46.74% of the population is foreign-born (United Nations Population Division, 2017). While I could not find a definitive percentage of the foreign-born population in the UAE, I found that in 2015 62,534 non-nationals were born in the UAE and infer that the total number of non-nationals born in the UAE is not insignificant from that measure (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2015). This demonstrates one of the challenges for doing a symmetrical comparison. The statistics released use the



categorizations implemented by the host country and these categories differ in both Singapore and the UAE.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I first discussed migration trends in both countries individually. Part of this discussion was giving a historical context, particularly for the trends involving the current population. It is important to see the population growth over time to develop the historical scope needed for a greater understanding. Both of these countries gained independence around the same time and much of their growth is due to immigration, especially in the case of the UAE. I also identified historical and current migration flows from source countries. From the establishment of these countries and independent states, the immigrant population has grown. Each has experienced periods of more rapid immigration.

World-systems theory can be applied to understand immigration trends in Singapore and the UAE. Both these countries have developed rapidly. Migrants are not only attracted by low-skilled jobs such as construction. There is also a growing emphasis on these countries knowledge-intensive economies which directs a flow of migrants into the country. There are many variables and elements which control these flows. Both countries attract migrants from low-wage nations. These migrants come with the hope to making more money than they would be able to in their home countries. Many of the sending countries these migrants come from are close to the destination country. This proximity helps to facilitate migration. According to Van Hear, Bakewell, and Long's revamping of the push-pull model, locality, including geographic proximity, helps facilitate the drive of human mobility. The dimension locality also includes the influence of immigration policies (2018). The relatively liberal policies in Singapore and the UAE help facilitate immigration which can be seen in these trends I presented in this chapter.

In this chapter, I discussed how the trends from these countries also share some similarities. Singapore and the UAE are two prime examples of the trends that result with a liberal immigration policy with residency restrictions. For example, Singapore has more restrictions for lower skilled migrants and the UAE only offers temporary residence and places no focus on integration. Both countries have relied on migrants throughout their histories and continue

to today. This reliance and openness towards immigration on the part of the government has resulted in societies which are characterized the prevalence of immigrants. Immigrants have made these countries what they are today. They also have some differences. While both have liberal immigration policies, the UAE has a much higher percentage of immigrations. Though this large difference is due in part to the differences in how migrants are categorized and upon further review the difference is not as great.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the policies which allowed for these trends to manifest. I will also discuss the motivations behind policy decisions, such as the motivations for having a liberal immigration system and how that has influenced these trends which I have discussed in this chapter. It is important to remember the connections between trends and policy. One influences the other. These trends which I have discussed in this chapter aid in understanding the policy and some will be referred to in the next chapter.

## **5.0 Migration Policy in Singapore and the UAE**

As previously mentioned, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates have historically had liberal immigration policies throughout recent history. The trends identified in the previous chapter in the part the result of such liberal policies. In this chapter, I will discuss these policies. I will begin by discussing the migration policies in Singapore and the UAE individually. This discussion includes a description of the migration policy and laws in each respective country. The most relevant and common official categories of migrants used in these countries will be identified and discussed. This is to provide the reader with knowledge of the qualifications necessary for different categories of migrants. The discussion will also address some of the recent policy changes, particularly the ones which have sought to limit immigration. The motivations behind these policies will also be discussed. After each case is examined individually, I will conduct a comparative analysis. I will identify commonalities in the migration policies from both Singapore and the UAE and shared motivations. Differences will also be identified and analyzed.

### **5.1 Singaporean Migration Policy**

Based on the studies I collected, it can be said that Singapore has a strategic plan which motivates their liberal immigration policy. As mentioned previously, Singapore has relied on migration in part to develop the economy in a country without natural resources (Yeoh, 2007). Another motivation for Singapore to attract immigrants and continue to attract immigrants is to counteract the aging and dwindling population (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017). According to the government, immigration helps Singapore compensate for their low total fertility rate which was just 1.16 in 2017. The population of working-age Singaporeans is projected to start declining in 2020. The government maintains that the population would have begun its descent earlier and shrunk at a more rapid rate had it not been for immigration (Sin, 2018). A report published as a collaboration between a few government agencies in Singapore stated:

Highly-skilled people are sought after globally. In Singapore, they contribute their skills and knowledge, help create jobs, and add vibrancy to our country. To attract and retain talent, Singapore must be a home for all. It goes beyond improving Singapore's economic prospects and creating

attractive opportunities. It means having a more gracious and liveable[sic] city where people will want to sink roots and stay permanently (Strategy Group Singapore, 2011).

This paragraph sums up the economic and social motivations for the government's favorable outlook on immigration. It is clearly stated that Singapore's government sees immigration as an opportunity to enhance the city-state and they seek to attract talent. They do this in many ways. One way is by attracting promising students and esteemed universities as I will discuss in the next chapter. They also do this by designing policies to attract skilled professionals (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). Skilled professionals are the sort of migrants Singapore is particularly interested in recruiting (Strategy Group Singapore, 2011). It can be argued that recruiting this type of migrant is the main goal of Singapore's liberal immigration policy. While there are also low-skilled migrants who serve a purpose, Singapore's overall economic goals depend largely on skilled migrants.

This argument is supported by the different types of work permits and employment passes available for migrant workers of different skills and the benefits extended to skilled professionals which are not granted to low-skilled workers. Singapore offers a variety of work permits and employment passes depending on factors such as skill level and salary. Different types of work passes and permits give an immigrant different permissions and privileges. For example, immigrants holding employment passes have less restrictions and are given some advantages over those holding work permits (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). While there are many specific visas, the main ones I will cover in this chapter are employment passes, work permits, and S-passes.

Work permits are usually held by semi-skilled and low-skilled migrant workers and are usually valid for two years. This type of permit does not give the holder much flexibility. Work permit holders are only permitted to work in the sector and for the employee stated on their work permit card. They are also not allowed to marry a Singaporean citizen, even after their permit expires, without permission from the Ministry of Manpower. They are also not permitted to give birth to a child in Singapore ("Work Permit Conditions", 2017). Work pass holders come as individuals since they do not qualify to sponsor family members ("Eligibility for Dependant's Pass", 2018). In the case of employment completion, termination or resignation the work pass holder is required to leave within seven days and must self-finance their

repatriation (“Work Permit Conditions”, 2017). There is a quota for industries put into place to regulate the number of migrant workers. Employers must pay a foreign worker levy for each work permit holder they hire. The levy price depends on the worker’s qualifications and the dependency ceiling, or quota, established for the industry (“What is the foreign worker levy?”, 2017).

Employment passes provide more flexibility for an immigrant. Employment passes are intended for foreign professionals who make a fixed minimum salary of at least S\$3,600 (US\$2,750) a month who have relevant qualifications. The pass lasts up to two years for new pass holders and renewed passes can last up to three years. Employment pass holders who make a monthly salary of at least S\$6,000 (US\$4,583) are eligible for family sponsorship. These eligible pass holders are permitted to sponsor their spouses and children under 21 years of age provided that they meet the salary requirement. This minimum salary requirement went into effect on January 1, 2018 (“Employment Pass”, 2018).

S Passes are intended for mid-level skilled workers. The monthly salary demands are less demanding than for an employment pass. Candidates only need to earn a monthly salary of S\$2,200 (US\$1680) to qualify provided they have the acceptable qualifications and experience. The pass is renewable the duration lasts up to two years. Immigrants holding an S Pass are also eligible for family sponsorship if they earn a salary of S\$6,000 (US\$4,583) a month (“S Pass”, 2018).

In 2007, Singapore introduced the Personalized Employment Pass (PEP) (Yeoh & Lin, 2012). PEP holders have greater flexibility than regular employment passes. This pass is for foreign professionals who command a high salary. Existing Employment Pass holders are required to earn a monthly salary of S\$12,000 (US\$9,165) and overseas foreign professionals who apply but earn S\$18,000 (US\$13,748) a month. The benefit of this pass that it is not tied to a particular employer. A PEP holder can change jobs without having to re-apply and can be employed for a period of up to six months. This pass last up to three years but it is not renewable. Holders of this pass are eligible to sponsor certain family members (“Personalised Employment Pass”, 2018).

Singapore allows for immigrants to become permanent residents. As previously mentioned, Singapore divides its population into two main categories: residents and non-residents

(Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2017). Non-residents are temporary migrants who hold a work permit or employment pass such as one of the passes described in this section. The Singaporean government considers residents to be either citizens or permanent residents. Some non-residents can apply to be permanent residents, however, not everyone is eligible. Employment Pass holders, S Pass holders, the spouse or child of a citizen or permanent resident, can be eligible for permanent residency (“Becoming a Permanent Resident, 2018). Singapore sees permanent residence as an intermediate step for immigrants who hope to become naturalized Singaporean citizens. Since 2009, around 30,000 individuals have been granted permanent residency each year to keep the population size of permanent residents stable. They maintain the population of permanent residents to have a sufficient sized pool of qualified potential candidates for naturalization (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017).

Singapore also allows for foreign born permanent residents to become citizens. Permanent residents 21 years of age and older can apply for naturalization. The individual must have been a permanent resident for at least two years. The spouse or child born abroad of a citizen can also apply for naturalization (“Becoming a Singapore Citizen”, 2018). Each year 15,000 – 25,000 individuals are granted Singaporean citizenship (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017). Not everyone born in Singapore is given citizenship. A child born to parents who are not Singaporeans is not granted citizenship (Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, 1965). If a child is born to a Singaporean citizen and a non-citizen, they can apply for citizenship provided that the parents are married (Wei, 2015).

These sources support the argument that Singapore has a strong preference for skilled migrants. These privileges given to skilled migrant workers but not low-skilled help to retain desirable migrants. Migrants with employment passes can become permanent residents and sponsor some dependent family members. This allows them to establish a deeper connection in the country and the ability to stay. The hope is that these skilled migrants will stay in the country and contribute to the knowledge economy. Low-skilled migrants are necessary, but they are not encouraged, or even allowed, to develop these kinds of deep roots. They are only given non-resident, or temporary, status and must migrate individually.

Even though the government continues to promote immigration, there has been some push-back by the Singaporean public. One of the occurrences frequently cited in relation to public opposition to immigration is the 2011 General Election. The People’s Action Party (PAP) has

virtually dominated Singapore's government since independence in 1965. During the general election of 2012, PAP won 60.1% of the vote, which is the lowest proportion it has held since independence (Min, 2015). Even though they still held 81 of the 87 seats, this was still considered to be a disappointing result. For comparison, in 2006 they received 66.6% of the vote and in 2001 they won 75.3% of the vote. One of the reasons cited for this decline in public support is the public's discontent regarding the liberal immigration system and the number of immigrants in Singapore ("A Win-Win Election?", 2011). There had also been earlier policy changes which affect the immigration policy. In 2009, the immigration policy was tightened. This reform led to limiting the number of individuals granted permanent residence each year (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017). You can see this demonstrated in Figure 3 from the previous chapter. The size of the non-resident population continued to grow but the growth of the permanent resident population leveled off. The result of the 2011 General Election also caused Singapore to place a cap on the number of foreign students in the country and increase fees for foreign university students (Davie, 2014). I will discuss this in further detail in the next chapter.

Even though recent public resentment has caused the government to adapt their approach to migration, the Singaporean government maintains that immigration is important for Singapore's future prosperity, particularly when it comes to Singapore's falling birth rate and aging population. In March 2018, Minister Josephine Teo stated that the government did not foresee any significant policy changes in the immediate future (Sin, 2018). However, the government continues to struggle to balance their intended benefits of the liberal immigration policy with the public's resentment and discontent.

## **5.2 Emirati Migration Policy**

As mentioned in Chapter 3, The UAE's immigration policy was designed to attract a large number of foreign workers but only for as long as they were needed. To ensure that migrants would return home when the demand wanes, all immigrants in the UAE hold temporary status (Abdi, 2015; Ali, 2010). Permanent residency is not an option. The government does not provide any integration service because it is not concerned with integrating its immigrants into society (Kamrava & Barbar, 2012). It can be argued that integration is not necessary because the UAE does not have the goal of incorporating immigrants permanently into society.

Naturalization is rarely extended and the renunciation of previously held nationality is a prerequisite. According to Article 8 of Federal Law No. 17 concerning nationality, a person can qualify for citizenship if they have lived in the UAE legally for at least 20 years, are proficient in Arabic, have a lawful income, are not a criminal, and if they are well reputed (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Justice, 2008a). In this case, the individual must be granted citizenship by order of a ruler, emir, or king and only happens in extremely rare occasions. A non-national woman who marries a citizen can apply to become a citizen. However, citizenship is not guaranteed in this case (Naufal, 2011).

Children born in the UAE are only given citizenship if one or both parents are a citizen. A child born to an Emirati father and a foreign mother is automatically considered a citizen. However, a child born to an Emirati mother and a foreign father is not automatically granted citizenship. (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Justice, 2008a). Before 2011, children born to an Emirati mother and a non-national father were not recognized as citizens. The law was changed in 2011 allowing individuals in this category to apply for citizenship (US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, 2012). Children born to two foreign parents cannot claim naturalization rights. They also are not granted any more security regarding their immigration status than any other non-national. They are still considered to be temporary migrants and as such could potentially lose their residence permit (Abdi, 2015; Ali, 2010; Vora, 2013).

According to UAE law, national workers should be prioritized. According to the policy, employers should also be given assistance to employ Emirati workers. If a national worker is not available, priority should go first to Arab workers from other Arab countries and then employment can be opened up to migrant workers of other nationalities. A work card can be canceled if a qualified national worker is found who can fill the position (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Justice, 2008b). As introduced in Chapter 3, The UAE's main system for immigration is the *kafala* system. An employer who wishes to hire a migrant worker must apply for a work permit through the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE). ("Getting a Work and Residency Permit", 2017). A migrant's employment in the *kafala* system is tied to their sponsorship and they cannot legally work for another employer (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Justice, 2008b). As an effort to ensure that a migrant worker is only in the country for as long as they are useful, migrant workers who lose their job are expected to be quickly repatriated. If they are fired, the employer is required to pay the cost of repatriation. If the migrant resigns, they are responsible to pay this cost (United Arab Emirates, Ministry of



Justice, 2008b). If the individual does not obtain a new residence permit from a new employer, they must leave within 30 days. Staying beyond this period is illegal and the individual is subject to overstay fines (Bobker, 2017b). This exhibits the country's attitude towards immigrants. The UAE uses migrants to fill jobs for which there are no national workers available. However, migrant workers are not able to stay past their utility. The system favors national workers. It could be argued that the UAE's policy is designed to ensure the repatriation of migrant workers if the UAE were someday able to fulfill employment needs with national workers.

Some migrant workers are able to bring their families to join them. Not every migrant is eligible to sponsor family members. This is often due to the salary requirements for eligibility. A man must earn a minimum monthly salary of Dh3,000 (US\$816) with accommodation or Dh4,000 (US\$1,089) without accommodation to sponsor his dependents. Dependents who qualify include his wife, unmarried daughter of any age, or son under 18 years of age. However, a son can be sponsored up to the age of 21 if they are studying in either the UAE or elsewhere. Requirements are more stringent for women sponsoring their husbands and children. She must earn a monthly salary of Dh8,000 (US\$2,178) with accommodation or Dh10,000 (US\$2,722) without accommodation. In addition, she must be employed in certain professions. Those include, engineer, teacher, doctor, nurse, or a profession in the medical sector ("Sponsoring resident visa by expatriates", 2017). The salary requirements for sponsoring spouses and children make this impossible for many migrants. This demonstrates the UAE is not interested in having large numbers of migrants, particularly low-wage migrants, establishing a form a permanency by moving their families to the country. A single migrant is more likely to leave to return to their family.

It can be argued that policy reforms in the UAE have been provoked by two main factors: Emirati workforce participation and criticisms regarding migrant worker rights. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the UAE population and workforce are dominated by immigrants. In particular, Emiratis are virtually excluded from the private sector with non-nationals occupying 99.5% of jobs in the private sector ("Fact Sheet," n.d.). Because of this, the government has sought to get more Emiratis working in the private sector to limit the dependence on foreign workers ("Emiratisation", 2018). The government wants to balance the population so that the local population is not so overwhelmingly outnumbered ("Population and demographic mix", 2017). These goals have led to the creation of policies such the 2005

Ministerial Orders 41, 42, and 43 which established quotas to require companies include nationals in the private sector (“Emiratisation”, 2018). This supports the argument that immigration policy is designed around the participation of the local workforce. The UAE wants to limit its dependence on immigration. Increasing the workforce participation of Emirati workers would mean less need for immigrants. The system allows for redundant migrant workers to be repatriated. This acts as a “push” factor causes migrants to leave the UAE.

Another motivation behind policy changes is the criticisms of migrant worker abuse from a system which left migrants vulnerable. The UAE has been compelled to enact policies to protect migrant worker rights. The UAE and the *kafala* system, which is also used in other countries in the gulf, have been criticized for leaving migrant workers vulnerable to abuse. Some have described the *kafala* system as “modern-day slavery” because of the lack of freedom workers experienced by beholden to the system. There have been many reported cases of employers confiscating their workers’ passports and withholding wages. Workers in the *kafala* system are trapped without the ability to change jobs or leave the country (Batty, 2014). Particular focus has been placed on migrant domestic workers who were often left vulnerable to abuse from their employers and were not protected by the law. Many domestic workers have reported physical abuse, sexual abuse, long work hours without breaks or time off, unpaid wages, being denied food, and not being permitted to leave the employer’s home. The abuse has caused sending countries, such as the Philippines, to react by blocking the flow of domestic workers from their country without an appropriate contract and pay (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

The UAE has responded to this criticism by policy changes aimed to improving migrant worker’s rights. The government has declared their commitment to the continual improvement of worker protections. They have introduced laws such as forbidding passport confiscation and allowing workers to switch jobs more easily (“The UAE and Human Rights”, n.d.) In 2017, the UAE addressed concerns regarding migrant domestic worker rights by approving a law which would require 30 days paid leave, adequate daily rest, proper accommodating and meals and forbids employers to withhold pay or confiscate legal documents (Salama, 2017). However, there is continued discrepancy between regulations and practice. Despite these policy changes, it is often not possible to universally enforce these reforms. It remains to be seen how these and any future policy changes will change the landscape of migrant employment in the UAE. For example, even though employers are not permitted to hold

worker's passports and by law can face jail and a fine, there are still cases of this. In some cases, employers even refuse to release the passport upon request (Bobker, 2017a). There are many challenges to the enforcement of these policies which the UAE must reckon with to adequately protect its migrant workers. The UAE has also enacted policies designed to allow the worker more flexibility. For example, the *kafala* system was reformed in 2011 to permit migrant workers to find new employment without their former employer's consent when their contract expired (Al Ubaydli, 2016). More recently, the UAE has changed its policy in March of 2018 to allow skilled workers to have two part time jobs provided they do not work more than 8 hours a day and have at least one day off weekly (Salama, 2018). This policy change and others are meant to provide more flexibility and security for migrant workers in the UAE.

### **5.3 Comparative Analysis of Migration Policies in Singapore and the UAE**

One major difference between the policies of Singapore and the UAE is that Singapore allows migrants to become permanent residents and even citizens (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017). While there are cases of migrants becoming citizens in the UAE this is extremely rare and policy favors temporary migrants (Ali, 2010). Part of the reasoning for this difference come from the comparison between the motivations for immigrants exhibited by both countries. When I juxtaposed the migration policies of both countries, I discovered some similarities and key differences in motivations for having a liberal immigration policy held by both of these countries which can be tied to each country's policy regarding permanency of migrants.

One notable difference in these two policies is that Singapore uses immigrants to compensate for a lack of natural resources and the UAE's main natural resource, oil, and the money earned from that has fueled migration (Ali, 2010; Yeoh, 2007). Both of these reasons have implications on the migrant workforce. However, Singapore's motivations for having a liberal immigration policy involve not only finding a workforce but also sustaining the population despite the aging population and low birth rate. They want to attract people who may someday become permanent residents and citizens who contribute to society. In a statement, the government states that part of their intentions behind their liberal immigration policy is to not only attract talented individuals but to encourage skilled talent to permanently relocate to Singapore (Strategy Group Singapore, 2011). The word *talent* is used often to describe the kind of immigrants they want to attract. Their approach to policy combines both attracting a

workforce, particularly a skilled workforce to aid in Singapore's development, and using immigration as a way to counteract the negative effects of the city-state's low birthrate. This is reflected in the policy regarding acquisition of permanent residency and naturalization. Low-skilled workers are not offered this path because their utility is not seen as being beyond filling the jobs that Singaporeans do not want to take. Skilled workers can apply for permanent residency and eventually citizenship because Singapore sees their utility as more than just a workforce but as talented individuals that can contribute to Singapore's position in the global knowledge economy (Economic Review Committee, 2003).

The motivations identified by the Singaporean government and additionally demonstrated through their policy are different than the motivations demonstrated by the UAE government. The UAE is interested in developing the country through knowledge-intensive sectors and immigrants have been tools used by the government in this respect. The UAE does not have enough local workers to meet the demands of the workforce. The economy has developed so quickly. Immigrants are needed for the knowledge-intensive sectors because there are not enough qualified Emirati nations for these positions (Al Ameri, 2012). This is similar to Singapore's use of migrants to achieve global status and a knowledge-based economy. However, the difference is that the UAE is not interested in having migrants stay indefinitely. Therefore, all migration into the UAE is temporary to ensure a transient nature of the foreign workforce. Singapore confines low-skilled migrants to temporary, or non-resident status. However, in Singapore a set number of migrants, particularly highly-skilled migrants, are able to and, to a degree, are encouraged to, become permanent residents or citizens. Based on the reports I collected from Singapore, recruiting desirable immigrants to come and stay permanently helps the knowledge economy and with population demographics. While Singapore gives advantages to some migrants, the UAE treats all migrants the same. They are all temporary regardless of skill level. In documents from the government and other non-government sources, migrants are seen for their utility in the workforce and no mention is made of using migration to sustain the UAE's population. In fact, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the UAE natural population is growing and not facing a low birthrate. This is demonstrated in Figure 5 from the previous chapter that the national population has continued to grow. In line with Singapore's desire to naturalize immigrants, the city-state sees integration as an important aspect of their migration policy. For example, the National Integration Council is committed to assisting immigrants adapt to Singapore and promoting cooperation between Singaporeans and migrants ("About NIC", n.d.). The UAE treats all its immigrants as

temporary and therefore does not provide state-sponsored integration services (Kamrava & Barbar, 2012).

It can be argued that while both countries have interest in the economic benefits of migrants, these are manifested in different ways. Particular interest is expressed regarding immigrant contribution to the knowledge economy in both countries. However, they differ regarding social benefits. Singapore utilizes immigration for demographic benefits. Desirable immigrants can become citizens and permanent residents. The UAE allows for migrants to stay long-term under temporary status through residence permit renewals. However, they restrict citizenship to Emirati nationals. Migrants are permitted to stay as long as they are economically necessary but only as long as this remains the case. This applies to all migrants. This suggests that the UAE is less concerned with retaining skilled migrants than Singapore. It can be argued that the lack of security regarding migration status acts as a “push” factor causing migrants to return home or to relocate to a third country where their status would be more stable. Therefore, it can be argued that this migration regime could deter top professionals who may be driven to work in other countries where they have a more secure status. For example, the security of acquiring permanent residence or citizenship can act as a “pull” factor for Singapore. Of course, migrants do still go to the UAE despite the insecurity demonstrating that there are other motivating factors.

It can be argued that part of the reasoning between these different migration strategies and goals is that the UAE is not a nation of immigrants in the same sense as Singapore is. Immigration has had more of an impact on the demographics of Singapore than in the UAE. Singaporean citizens are largely the descendants of Malaysian, Chinese, and Indian migrants (Yeoh, 2007). It can be argued that this longer history of liberal migration and the contemporary ethnic composition of the citizen population has affected the country’s migration policy. It can be argued that Singapore was developed as a country of immigrants and therefore is more inclined to integrate new migrants as permanent residents and citizens into the diverse society. In the UAE, most citizens are ethnically Emirati. So, while there is a large percentage of immigrants in the UAE, they have not been integrated in the same way. This historical precedent may be a factor in both of these cases.

One similarity which exists in Singaporean and Emirati law is that citizenship is not claimed on the basis of *jus solis*, citizenship by birthright, but instead *jus sanguinis*, citizenship granted

if one or both parents are citizens. In both countries, children born in the country to two immigrant parents are not given citizenship. Citizenship is given to children with at least one local parent. Immigrant children born in these countries assume the nationality of their parents (Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, 1965; United Arab Emirates, Ministry of Justice, 2008a).

Neither Singapore nor the United Arab Emirates have signed the United Nation’s 1951 Refugee Convention nor the 1967 Protocol (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.). Therefore, migrants do not come to these countries under the refugee label. Singapore claims that they are unable to offer refugee or asylum status in part due to a shortage of land (Osada, 2015). While displaced people are welcome in the UAE there is no official category. While the UAE has pledged support to displaced people migrating to the country, they are legally in the same category as labor migrants (WAM, 2017).

**Table 1: Comparing immigration policy in Singapore and the UAE**

	Singapore	United Arab Emirates
<b>Identified Motivations for Liberal Immigration Policy</b>	Economic Benefits - Building a knowledge economy - Need for workforce Social Benefits Population sustainability	Economic Benefits - Building a knowledge economy - Need for workforce
<b>Path to Permanent Residency/Citizenship</b>	Yes, for highly-skilled workers	No, citizenship only granted in rare circumstances
<b>Birth Citizenship</b>	Jus sanguinis, at least one citizen parent	Jus sanguinis, at least one citizen parent
<b>United Nation 1951 Refugee Convention/1967 Protocol</b>	Not signed	Not signed

## 5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed migration policy in both Singapore and the UAE. Both of these countries have liberal migration policies which have led to high migrant population. For each country I gave a description of some key migration policies to provide the reader with a basic understanding how these countries classify migrants and what kind of migrants come to both countries. Many migrants to these countries come to work and there are migrant workers from all levels present in both countries. I also described some of the differences in policy towards

workers of different skill levels. For example, in both countries skilled workers are given more flexibility such as the ability to sponsor dependents. There are also challenges involved with a liberal immigration policy. Both countries have large migrant populations. This has brought challenges and backlash. Therefore, they have had to address the challenges through policy adjustments to ensure that citizens are provided for and appeased.

Policy enacted by these countries contributes to the flow of migrants into the countries. Liberal immigration policies can act as a “pull” factor because of the ease facilitated by a liberal policy. Using the framework from Van Hear, Bakewell & Long updating the push-pull model, the dimension locality can be applied to this. As previously stated, immigration policy in a destination country can act as a driver of migration (2018). This can be applied to these countries. Other policies established in these countries involve the development of a knowledge-based economy. They have designed immigration policy to reach these economic goals. For example, Singapore’s policy provides more privileges and ease for talented professionals such as the ability to sponsor dependent family members and become permanent residents or citizens. The UAE also allows migrants with a sufficient income to sponsor dependents. These are often highly-skilled migrants. Attracting professionals to bring their skills and talents contributes to further development which influences the country’s position in the global economy, as also stated in world-system theory.

Policy affects trends and trends affect policy. This is the case of these two countries. Liberal policies brought high numbers of immigrants and the reaction to these high numbers have influenced new policy. I also compared these two cases and identified some of the similarities and differences. My main finding relates to migration permanency and the motivations behind policy relating to immigration status. Both Singapore and the UAE welcome immigrants to meet development goals and to establish their position in the global economy. However, Singapore has an additional motivation; Singapore need migrants to sustain a shrinking natural population. Because of this motivation, Singapore allows skilled migrants to naturalize. This counteracts the low birthrate.





## **6.0 International Student Regimes of Singapore and the UAE**

In this chapter, I will explore the international student regimes in both Singapore and the UAE. International student migration in the context of these two countries is a very interesting topic that fits well with the discussion of migration in both these countries. These countries are host countries to international students from the region and from other regions all over the world. In the case of the UAE, international students are sourced from the expatriate population within the country. Because of this, these countries have many international students in relation to their size. Both of these countries have made transnational education a priority. They wish to use global education and international students to boost their country's global educational and economic positions and improve educational outcomes for their own students. This focus and the ensuing progress has led to both countries being considered international education hubs. I will begin this chapter by exploring the international hubs in both countries individually. This will include a discussion of the history of development, international student trends, international student policy, and the current state international education in each country. I will then compare the data collected from both countries.

### **6.1 International Students in Singapore**

Singapore has placed a lot of focus on developing the city-state into an international education hub. In Chapter 3, I introduced Knight and Lee's framework of three types of international education hubs. These types are the student hub, the talent hub, and the knowledge/innovation hub. Using this framework aids in understanding the motivations and drivers behind a particular student hub. One important aspect to keep in mind is that while these categories are helpful, the reality is not always as clear. One hub can exhibit tendencies from more than one category or even all three categories. Similar characteristics can also be seen in more than one category. Also, as the hub's objectives and priorities change over time, another category may begin to fit the hub better (Knight & Lee, 2014). Singapore is predominately a knowledge/innovation hub. Their motivations for attracting students involve the end goal of being a knowledge- and innovation-based economy engaging in R&D and patent generation. Part of Singapore's strategy involved attracting top international branch campuses. The purpose of these institutions establishing a branch campus in Singapore was that these institutions would engage in knowledge-based activities which would contribute to

Singapore's overall ambitions of becoming a knowledge-based economy (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). Singapore's strategy does contain aspects of the other hub types. For example, Singapore has also expressed characteristics of a talent hub. They want to attract students who can eventually contribute to Singapore's workforce (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). Singapore also demonstrates some characteristics of a student hub. For example, part of the goal of recruiting international students is to have them contribute to the economy in part by paying tuition fees (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). It can be argued that while Singapore is predominantly a knowledge-based hub the other characteristics which are attributed to other hub types are a part of the strategy towards the overall goal of being a knowledge economy. For example, attracting talented students, like a talent hub does, helps Singapore have the individuals necessary for meeting the goals of creating a knowledge-based hub.

Singapore's education hub aspirations were a part of a concerted effort on the part of some governmental entities. The 1985 Economic Committee identified 18 sectors for Singapore to focus on and develop because of their potential to contribute to the economy. Among those sectors identified was the education sector (Education Workgroup, n.d.). Because of this recommendation, Singapore launched the "Global Schoolhouse" initiative in 2003. The objection of this initiative was to develop Singapore into a "global schoolhouse" which would attract students worldwide (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003). The government of Singapore saw many benefits to developing the country's education sector. Singapore sought to hold a larger slice of the international education industry (Education Workgroup, n.d.). They stated that education was a great business opportunity for the country (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). They saw the potential for the industry and the demand for international education. Singapore used this plan as a strategy for positioning themselves to need the global demand (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003). International students in Singapore would contribute to the economic growth through education fees (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). They would also contribute to growth in other sectors such as housing and retail (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003). The plan was that the development of Singapore's higher education institutes would have wider benefits on the economy. Higher education institutes in the city-state would also contribute to Singapore's ambitions of developing a knowledge-intensive economy by participating in research and development and patent generation. As discussed in the previous chapter, Singapore wants to recruit skilled individuals to contribute to their economy. This goal is also evident in the "Global Schoolhouse

Initiative.” Singapore’s plan involves attracting top international students and transitioning them into the workforce after they graduate. These internationally-mobile students trained the country would then contribute to Singapore’s economy. Developing the higher education industry would also benefit Singaporeans by providing good local educational opportunities (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.).

The “Global Schoolhouse” initiative established some goals for Singapore’s education industry. This initiative spans all educational levels. To meet their goals, Singapore would attract top foreign institutions, develop and improve local institutions and enterprises, and recruit many international students. Singapore was already in a good position. In 2003 when this initiative was launched, their three local universities were already starting to establish international reputes and 50,000 international students from all educational levels were in Singapore (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003). This target of this initiative was to increase the number of international students in Singapore to 150,000 in by 2015. Another goal was to develop the education sector so that it would grow to comprise three to five percent of the GDP, up from the 1.9% it contributed in the year 2000. This growth would be comprised of the money brought in by full-fee paying international student and increased spending at educational institutions (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). The Singapore Tourism Board was named to lead the initiative. They were given the responsibility of recruiting international students and helping them settle in Singapore (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003).

As mentioned, Singapore was already in a good position at the start of this initiative because of their global position at the time and the competitive advantages it possessed. In a speech launching the “Global Schoolhouse” initiative, Minister for Trade and Industry George Yeo, stated,

Because of Singapore’s position between the First and the Third World, our multilingual facility and our excellent public education infrastructure, this growing education market in Asia is a major economic opportunity for us. We can play a major role in providing a wide range of educational services both in Singapore and in other parts of Asia (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003).

Singapore’s geographical positioning does have an advantage. Many internationally-mobile students come from Asian countries. In the launch speech, Yeo stated that Asian students were

expected to comprise 70% of internationally-mobile students by 2025. Singapore's proximity to the source countries is an advantage (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003).

Singapore also had other strengths. For example, Singapore's public education system had already established a good reputation. English being the language of instruction is also a competitive advantage because of the large market seeking an English-language education. The country also had the advantage of having a reputation of being a safe country. The Singaporean government also stressed the attractiveness of the society's progressiveness and the "East-meets-West" nature of the society (Education Workgroup, n.d.). At the time of the launch, Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB) had already recruited reputable universities to establish branch campuses in the city-state. These included Georgia Tech, Johns Hopkins, INSEAD, and MIT, Technical University of Munich, and University of Chicago (Education Workgroup, n.d.; Singapore Government Press Release, 2003). These are all potential "pull factors" which can promote the country to potential foreign students.

The "Global Schoolhouse" dream has certainly had challenges and setbacks in the last 15 years. I do not have official on how many international tertiary students are in Singapore. The government does not frequently release official statistics on the number of international students in the city-state. However, in a 2012 parliament Q&A regarding the "Global Schoolhouse" Initiative, Minister for Trade and Industry Lin Hng Kiang stated that there were 84,000 student pass holders, 68% of which were tertiary students (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2012). This number was far below the target of 150,000. The Straits Times reported that the number of international students in Singapore peaked at 97,000 in 2009 before starting to decline. By 2014, The Straits Times reported that there were 75,000 international students in the country (Davie, 2014). In June 2017, 4% of non-residents, or around 65,940 people were students (Strategy Group Singapore, 2017). These numbers include primary, secondary, and tertiary students. The decline which started in 2009 can be attributed to a few factors. One factor is the global financial crisis. Another drawback was the private school scandal in 2009 when many private schools were found to be below standard. The 2011 General Election also forced policy changes which affected international student numbers. After the election the government announced that the percentage of international students in Singapore would be 15% by 2015, down from 18% in 2011 (Davie, 2014).

In addition to not meeting the international student enrollment goals established by the “Global Schoolhouse” initiative, Singapore faced another setback. Some of the international branch campuses were forced to close because of weak demand and lack of sufficient funding. Branch campuses were faced with financial challenges such as high land costs (Education Workgroup, n.d). In 2007, the University of New South Wales closed only three months after opening. New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts Asia closed in 2012 for financial reasons. The University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business moved its operations to Hong Kong in order to be closer to the Chinese economy. Some branch campuses continued to grow and thrive (Davie, 2014). However, losing the presence of esteemed institutions such as Tisch were a drawback and forced people to consider if the “Global Schoolhouse” ambitions had ended. (“Is Singapore’s Global Schoolhouse Dream Over”, 2017).

Based on the information I presented in this section, it can be argued that despite the shortcomings and failures regarding Singapore’s goals, the country does hold a respectable position in the global education sector. Singapore had high hopes and ambitions. Unfortunately, the country was unable to attract enough internationally-mobile students to meet their goals and to provide sufficient demand for the branch campuses. Regardless, it can be argued that Singapore is not altogether a failed attempt at developing an international education hub. They are still considered to be so, and despite the “Global Schoolhouse” initiative not meeting all its goals, some goals were met. It was announced that the education sector accounted for 3.2% of the total GDP as of December 2011 (Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2012). The percentage of the GDP that the education sector accounted for was within the three to five percent range established by the initiative, though it was on the lower end of the range. Despite the challenges Singapore has faced, some people are still optimistic about the city-state’s potential to be an international education hub (Iyer, 2017).

## **6.2 International Students in the UAE**

There are over 77,000 non-local students studying in the UAE (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.). Most non-national tertiary students are enrolled in private universities. Only 3,509 students are in public universities, or federal universities (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2017). The international student regime in the United Arab Emirates is unique. The country educates non-national students from both inside and outside the country.

Expatriate students account for a significant percentage of tertiary students in the UAE. A 2014 report stated that 40% of all tertiary students in the country were expatriate students (Khan, 2016). As discussed previously, sons sponsored by their fathers lose their sponsorship when they turn 18. However, this can be deferred to age 21 if they are a student (“Sponsoring resident visa by expatriates”, 2017). As I mentioned in Chapter 3, this can be used as a strategy for staying in the country longer.

There are also attractive features to the country’s international education regime. The UAE’s competitive advantages include: their reputation for high-quality education, the diverse setting, the reputations of Dubai and Abu Dhabi as innovative cities, political stability, and a low-crime rate. (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2017). These factors act as “pull factors” making the country an attractive destination for internationally-mobile students. However, it can be argued that these “pull” factors are not particularly compelling and not enough in themselves to make the UAE a competitive option for true cross-border internationally-mobile students. Their local universities are not as highly esteemed as many other countries (QS World University Rankings, 2018).

According to Knight and Lee’s model which I introduced in Chapter 3, the UAE as an education hub can be characterized primarily as a talent hub and a knowledge/innovation hub. The government of the UAE is currently undertaking an agenda called National Agenda 2021. The goal is to make the UAE one of the best countries in the world by the year 2021. One of these visions is for the country to be a “competitive knowledge economy.” Another one is to have a “first-rate education system,” (“UAE Vision”, 2021). The UAE wants a knowledge-based economy built on innovation, research, science, and technology. The plan to turn the UAE into a knowledge-based economy encompasses the promotion of the education system. While there is a focus on educating the local population, the plan recognizes the importance of attracting and retaining global talent (“United in Knowledge,” n.d.). This plan incorporates aspects of both knowledge/innovation hubs and talent hubs. This plan uses higher education to reach its knowledge economy goals and to build a talented workforce to facilitate a knowledge-based economy. Competitive high-quality higher education can attract top foreign students. These students can potentially stay after they complete their studies and join the workforce, thereby bringing global talent (Kazim, 2015). However, it can be argued that in reality the UAE is better categorized as a student hub, at least in a way. Many of the students in the UAE are the children of immigrants in the country who are studying in the UAE as a strategy for staying

longer in the country. While the UAE expresses aspirations of being a knowledge-based economy and using transnational education to do so, these expatriate students are not drawn by this. For these students, going to university in the UAE is more out of convenience or necessity.

Branch campuses are an important part of the UAE's international student regime. Many of the benefits are similar to benefits in other countries. Leaders and governments of different emirates have attracted international institutions to set up branch campuses in their emirate (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2013). Many of these branch campuses have been attracted to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the more populous and well-known emirates. Others have established in lesser known emirates such as Ras al Khaimah. Leaders in smaller emirates also seek the benefits that higher education and international students bring (Edwards, 2017). International branch campuses are said to help the economy and contribute to research and development. Attracting already reputable universities save the country time since they then do not have to invest so much effort, time, and money building up their local universities (Swan, 2013). The UAE's rapidly increasing reputation for higher education has been attributed to international branch campuses (Kazim, 2015). Branch campuses play a major part of the tertiary education system in the UAE. There are over 40 branch campuses in the country. This is the highest concentration of international branch campuses in the world. Most of these are in Dubai (Swan, 2013). Branch campuses are often located in free zones. As mentioned in Chapter 3, free zones are areas which the government established. They provide benefits such as the ability to hold 100% ownership of an enterprise and the ability to operate tax free (Ali, 2010). One of these free zones is Dubai International Academic City. It was established in 2007. After ten years, it has attracted 23 universities. Those universities educate over 25,000 students from all over the world (Staff Report, 2017). In the UAE, international branch campuses also provide education to expatriate students (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2017). Most international students are enrolled in private universities, such as international branch campuses, because of lack of access to federal universities. Until recently, all federal universities were limited to local students. In 2013, Zayed University started admitting non-national students. This was the first federal university in the UAE to do so. In 2016, the UAE university announced that they would begin to enroll non-national students for the first time (Swan, 2016).

The UAE considers the initiative to build an internationally well-regarded education hub a success. One measure of this is the rapid growth of the higher education sector and the success

in attracting high-ranking universities to establish branch campuses in the country (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2013). There have been many successes. Many top universities have established a presence in the country, such as New York University and Paris-Sorbonne University in Abu Dhabi (“Arab Region Branch Campuses”, n.d.). However, there have been challenges and disappointing setbacks. While attracting so many branch campuses so quickly can be seen as a success it in itself brings challenges. A few years ago, UAE’s branch campuses began to struggle due to a lack of demand. Some of these branch campuses were forced to close. For example, George Mason University opened a branch campus in Ras al Khaimah in 2006. They closed in 2009 due to poor enrollment (Bardsley, 2009a). Many other branch campuses struggled to find enough qualified applicants (Lewin, 2009). Academic standards needed to be maintained. The American University of Ras al Khaimah, which replaced George Mason University, had to lower the admission requirements in order to obtain sufficient enrollment (Bardsley, 2009b). Low enrollment figures were also attributed to economic problems. These economic problems significantly lowered the number of potential students. Many expatriates left when they lost their jobs in the economic crisis. Since branch campuses enroll many expatriate students, the sudden decline in demand hit these institutions hard (Lewin, 2009). Based on this, it can be argued that expatriate students are a crucial part of the UAE as an international education hub because of the substantial role they play.

Despite these drawbacks, today there is more optimism regarding the UAE’s position as an international education hub. The population of internationally-mobile students is growing (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2013; Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, 2017; Staff Report, 2017). The country is an attractive destination and institutions are continuing to establish a presence in the country. In February 2018, the University of Birmingham was officially inaugurated in Dubai International Academic City. The university is optimistic about the future of the Dubai campus. There are plans to develop a campus capable of housing 4,500 in the next couple of years (Masudi, 2018).

### **6.3 Comparative Analysis of International Student Regimes in Singapore and the UAE**

Both Singapore and the UAE have expressed similar motivations and reasons behind promoting themselves as international education hubs. Both countries have explicitly



expressed their aspirations of building a knowledge economy and their strategy of using transnational education as a component of the plan to reach their goals (Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.; “UAE Vision”, 2021). They also both have put forth initiatives to promote local higher education institutions and attract foreign institutions to both contribute to the knowledge economy and train a workforce (Kazim, 2015; Ministry of Trade and Industry, n.d.). In both countries, the international student regime is related to the country’s existing position as countries with high populations of immigrants and a liberal immigration policy. In Singapore, attracting students is a way of obtaining new talent while they are young and integrating them into the country so that they will stay after graduation and contribute to building a talented workforce (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003). In the UAE, the children of expatriate workers have contributed significantly to the international student population in the country (Khan, 2016; Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2017). Both have emphasized the importance of international branch campuses in providing educational opportunities for local and foreign students and in contributing to a knowledge-based economy (Education Workgroup, n.d.; Singapore Government Press Release, 2003; Swan, 2013).

One important distinction is the difference in the strategies employed by each country. The UAE does not have a national strategy directly focused on international students. Instead, a plan aimed at the overall development of the country incorporates the development and internationalization of the higher education sector. This is namely the National Agenda 2021 (“UAE Vision”, 2021). In addition, many of the emirates in the UAE act independently to attract foreign universities and students. Discussion regarding strategy often focuses individual emirates and not the country as a whole (Edwards, 2017). Singapore, however, has the “Global Schoolhouse” which is directly involved in attracting international students to study in the country (Singapore Government Press Release, 2003).

Both of these countries have faced challenges which have had negative effects on their international student regime. Both countries faced setbacks due to the financial crisis in 2009. Branch campuses were forced to close in both countries which caused people to question whether these countries would be able to succeed as international education hubs (Davie, 2014; Lewin, 2009). Singapore had additional setbacks. One was the private school scandal where many private schools were found to be operating below standard. In addition, public dissatisfaction highlighted by the 2011 General Election caused the government to reform its plans and place limits on the number of international students in the country (Davie, 2014). I

searched news articles and previous literature to see if similar resentment existed in the UAE. I could not find any evidence of that. It can be argued that because international students were only granted admission to federal institutions recently, there has not been concern among the Emirati nationals regarding international students taking study places from local students.

Singapore and the UAE have similar “pull factors” which attract international students. These include a reputation for safety, the attractiveness of the location, proximity to source countries, and English as the language of instruction (Education Workgroup, n.d.; Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2017). World-systems theory can also be applied to international student mobility in these countries. This flow also extends to trends in transnational education and international student mobility as students and knowledge flow from peripheral countries to core countries. This is reinforced by the push-pull model by suggesting that students from peripheral countries are influenced by “pull factors” (Kondakci, Bedenlier, Zawacki-Richter, 2017). Singapore and the UAE are working to establish themselves as core countries. Part of this strategy is through higher education and the development of an international education hub. The knowledge-intensive economy developed in part through research, development, and knowledge creation at higher education institutions raising the country’s global positioning. This, in turn, attracts more migrants and students as the country’s global positioning makes it a more attractive destination country for migrants.

**Table 2: Comparing international student regimes of Singapore and the UAE**

	Singapore	United Arab Emirates
<b>International Student Population (most recent)</b>	65,940†	77,463
<b>Students Attracted</b>	Regional	Predominantly expatriate and regional
<b>Education Hub Category (Knight &amp; Lee, 2014) *</b>	Knowledge/innovation Talent	Talent Knowledge/innovation Student
<b>Desired Outcomes</b>	Developing a knowledge economy and skilled workforce	Developing a skilled workforce and knowledge economy
<b>National Plan</b>	Global Schoolhouse (2003)	No national plan directly focused on international students
<b>Relevant Push-Pull Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proximity to source countries</li> <li>- Attractive location</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proximity to source countries</li> <li>- Attractive location</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- English instruction</li> <li>- Good reputation of local universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety</li> <li>- English instruction</li> </ul>
<b>Setbacks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Branch campus closures</li> <li>- Private school scandals</li> <li>- Negative public opinion of immigration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Branch campus closures</li> </ul>

\*International education hubs often exhibit characteristics of more than one category of hub. All relevant categories are included and listed in order of importance.

† Includes primary, secondary, and tertiary students.

It can be argued that the UAE’s status as an international education hub is largely dependent on its expatriate population. As previously stated, expatriate students comprise a substantial percentage of international students in the country. When comparing these countries in terms of educational prestige, Singapore’s local universities are much better regarded. Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings (QS) has listed Singapore’s Nanyang Technical University (NTU) as the 11<sup>th</sup> best university in the world and the best in Asia. QS also placed the National University of Singapore (NUS) in the 15<sup>th</sup> position. According to this same ranking, the best local university in the UAE, the United Arab Emirates University, holds the 390<sup>th</sup> position (QS World University Rankings, 2018). Therefore, it can be argued that without the expatriate students seeking a tertiary education in the UAE the country would not be considered an international education hub. Internationally-mobile students seeking a quality education are going to prefer countries, such as Singapore, with top ranking universities. Branch campuses such as NYU do help the UAE. The reputation of NYU and other prestigious branch campuses can boost the attraction, or the academic “pull factor” of the UAE. However, it is clear that the UAE’s status as an international education hub largely dependent on the expatriate who use studying as a strategy. Singapore’s prestigious universities are a more dominant “pull” factor for internationally-mobile students.

## 6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the international student regimes in Singapore and the UAE. Both of these countries provided interesting cases because of their status as international education

hubs. They have both promoted the development of their countries as student hubs to develop a workforce and to create a knowledge- and innovation-based economy. They have used similar methods to do this such as attracting international branch campuses. In this chapter, I introduced both cases individually. The discussion included a brief history of the initiatives promoted relating to the international student regime. I categorized the hubs based on a model from Knight & Lee (2014). These regimes exhibit overlapping qualities from the three categories which demonstrates the variety of motivations existing in the strategies from both countries and interacting with each other. I also discussed trends and policy regarding international students to show the recent and current state of the international student regimes in both countries. These countries both share “pull factors” which attract internationally-mobile students. These include a low-crime rate and a good reputation among others identified in this chapter. (Education Workgroup, n.d.; Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2017).

A major component of the international student population in the UAE is expatriate students. These are students who are the children of immigrants who have lived for many years, or maybe their whole lives, in the UAE. This component is crucial to the UAE’s status as an international education hub as I argue that the UAE is not competitive enough to attract enough internationally-mobile students to have developed an education hub without expatriate students. These students, particularly male students who need to study in order to remain sponsored by a family member stay and study in the UAE despite “push” factors, such as losing family sponsorship. They have a connection with the country, especially those for whom it is the only place they have ever considered to be home. This component is not as significant in Singapore and the country’s local universities are well regarded can act as a “pull” factor to attract top internationally-mobile students.

These countries have both had challenges and setbacks which have negatively impacted their international student regimes. The 2009 economic crisis affected the international student regimes of both countries. Both countries experienced some failures such as the closures of international branch campuses (Davie, 2014; Lewin, 2009). Despite these challenges both countries continue to promote these goals (Iyer, 2017; “UAE Vision”, 2021)

## 7.0 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore and compare immigration in two countries with liberal immigration policies. I chose Singapore and the UAE because they are both provide interesting cases. In this thesis, I focused on three thematic categories of migration in each country and compared migration in relation to each aspect. These aspects, reflected in the analytical chapters, were migration trends, migration policy, and international students. Migration trends and policy are related to each other as one often influences the other and they both are present in the discussion of the international student regime in both countries. This thesis presented and analyzed the data relating to these three aspects and addressed the connections between them. The analytical chapters were divided in this way however clean divisions are not possible as these three aspects all relate and inform each other. Even though both of these countries have liberal migration policies and share some motivations there are some distinct features which I discussed in my comparative analysis in each analytical chapter. This thesis was the result of a desk study in which I qualitatively analyzed reports and studies collected from materials found online. These sources included the governments of Singapore and the UAE and external sources. The primary theoretical framework used in this thesis was the push-pull model. It was supplemented by other theories to compensate for the weaknesses of the theory. This model was used to explain migration and return migration in the context of these two countries.

Both Singapore and the UAE have placed an importance on migration for the development of and to boost the global positioning of the country. These are countries which have been built by migrants and which migration has historically been a major part of the country. They provided cases of liberal immigration policies which persist in a time where many countries are limiting migration. Although these are cases with liberal migration policies, there are restrictions. For example, the immigrants to the UAE are only granted temporary status and only skilled migrants in Singapore can apply for permanent residence and citizenship. These numbers are also limited. Despite some challenges, both countries stress the economic benefits of migration. This is reflected in their migration trends and policy and in their international student regimes. My findings show that both countries seek to use migrants to contribute to economic growth. Singapore attracted migrants because of a lack of natural resources and the UAE attracted migrants to fill the jobs created by the discovery of oil, the country's dominant

natural resource. Both countries have stressed the desire to develop a knowledge-based economy to contribute to further economic prosperity. However, they have used different strategies to do this which are evident in migration policy. Migration policy influenced trends, namely the facilitation of a large number of migrants. These trends also influence policy. For example, the rapid migration was met with disapproval from Singaporean citizens. Trends and policy also affect the international student regime in both country. Both countries use the international student regime to reach these economic goals by attracting research and development institutions and global talent through tertiary education. In the UAE migration policies which makes everyone, even non-nationals born in the country, temporary residents have affected the country's development of an international education hub. I argued that this hub might not have been possible had it not been for the need to education expatriate students. This demonstrates how these three aspects discussed, migration trends, policy, and international students, are related.

Migration is a complex topic with many variables, actors, and aspects. This thesis was limited by time and therefore many of these variables had to be excluded. Other included aspects could not be thoroughly explored due to these limitations. Many of these topics can and should be elaborated in further detail. The fact that this thesis was solely the product of a desk study also had some limitations. For example, speaking with international students regarding their personal experiences studying in either Singapore and the UAE would have provided a personal aspect. It could have provided a greater insight and understand to how policy and trends affect the lives and experiences international students. Further research can be done using other methods, such as interviews with both students and professionals. This would provide a more complete understanding of the personal aspects of migration. Widely-conducted surveys or interviews could also be conducted. It is possible that a large-scale research project could uncover more push-pull factors and other drivers than I was able to find using my method of data collection. More work can also be done understanding the reasons non-expatriate students are attracted to the UAE. In relation, research could be done exploring immigrant children in Singapore. I found no information in the literature or from the data I collected related to this. This may not be a large group, but it would have been interesting to have been able to include this for the sake of comparison. Finally, this is an ever-changing topic and future changes in policy and trends may change the understanding of migration in these countries.

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